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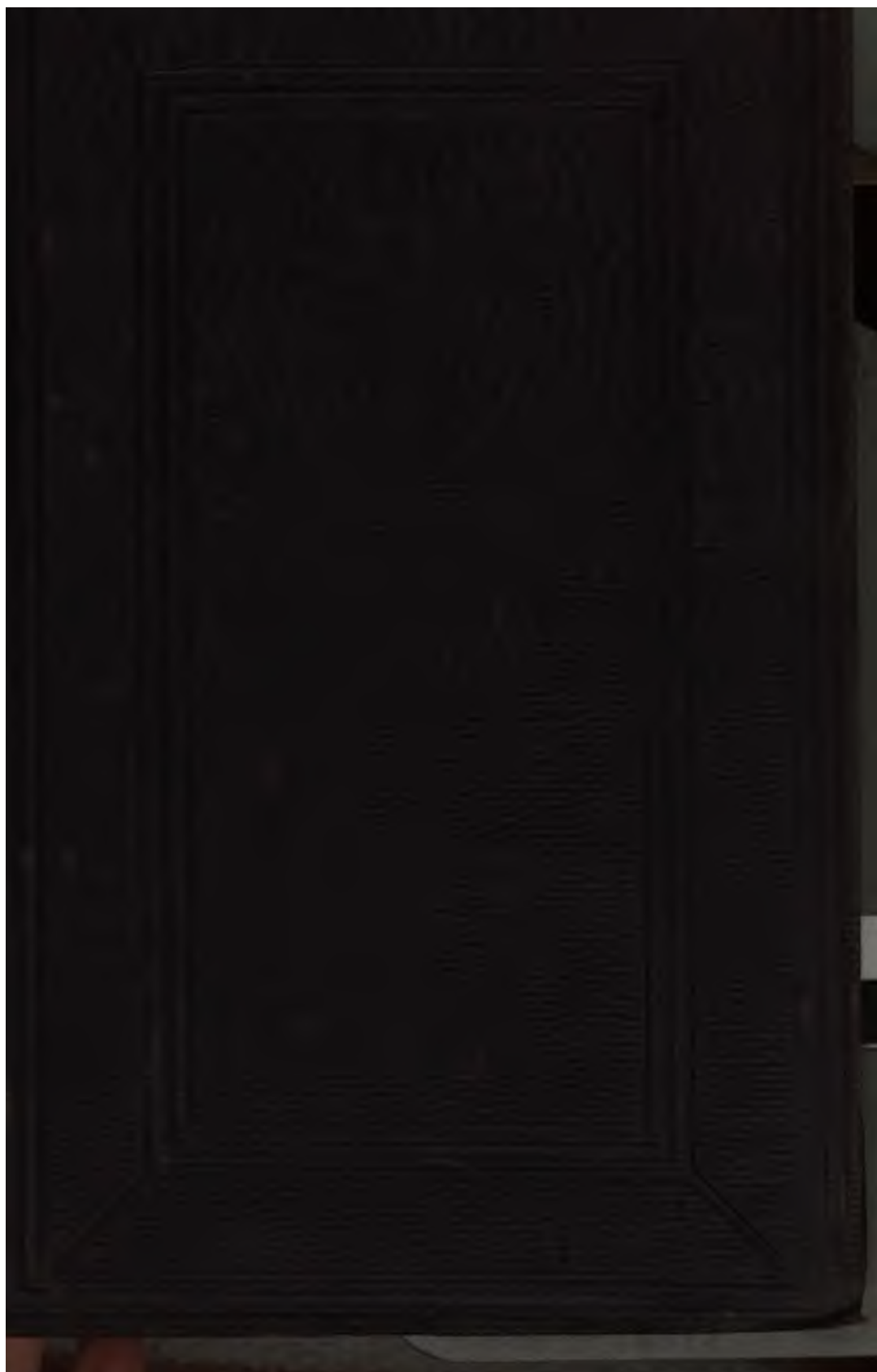
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SIX-PREACHER SERMONS:

INCLUDING THE SUBJECTS OF

NATIONAL EDUCATION;

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND VIEW OF LENT DUTIES
AND SERVICES;

AND

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF SAINT PAUL.

A Course

DELIVERED IN CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

BY

THE REV. CHARLES FORSTER, B.D.

ONE OF THE SIX-PREACHERS; AND RECTOR OF
STISTED, ESSEX.

AUTHOR OF "THE ONE PRIMEVAL LANGUAGE."



LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET;
Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1853.

100. 2. 54.

LONDON :
SPOTTISWOODE and SHAW,
New-street-Square.

TO
THE VENERABLE
JAMES WILLIAM FORSTER, LL.D.
ARCHDEACON OF AGHADOE,
AND VICAR-GENERAL OF LIMERICK:

FORMERLY FOR MANY YEARS
(WITH BENEFIT TO THAT PORTION OF THE CHURCH IN IRELAND,
UNIVERSALLY FELT AND TWICE PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED
BY THE CLERGY)

BISHOP'S COMMISSARY OF THE UNITED DIOCESES

IN TESTIMONY OF BROTHERLY LOVE,

THIS VOLUME

IS INSCRIBED.

STATED RECTORY, BRAINTREE,
April 10. 1853.

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SERMON I.

NATIONAL EDUCATION INSEPARABLE FROM RELIGION.

1 COR. viii. 1—3.

“ Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him.”

THE maxim that “knowledge is power” has long exercised a great and sensibly growing influence upon society, and upon what is termed “public opinion,” in these countries. Of late years the epidemic has become universal. The influence of this maxim has usurped a sovereign authority: it has controlled our statesmen, and governed our parliaments. The advancement of knowledge, the diffusion of knowledge, and the deference due to the increasing light and knowledge of the population, are the themes which now open to ambition the only road to power, and which supply popular eloquence with the only acceptable topics of declamation. In a word, the knowledge fever is at

its height: high and low, rich and poor, with unaccustomed unanimity, congratulate themselves, and congratulate each other, upon "the signs of the times," and upon their happy lot being cast in this enlightened generation; while knowledge seems held to be the sole panacea, the universal medicine, for the heart as well as for the head, for the morals and religion, no less than for the mind of man. The maxim that "knowledge is power" has been practically enlarged into the belief, that knowledge is wisdom, is goodness, is piety, is every thing; since it is the seed and source of all human proficiency and attainment.

Now, if these things be so; if knowledge be indeed thus all-powerful; and if ours be, what it assuredly conceives itself to be, a knowing generation; it may surely be inquired, without offence, *Where are the fruits?* where, now, those giants of the elder times of England, the Bulls and Barrows, the Hookers, and Hammonds, and Lightfoots of theology? — the Bacons, and Boyles, and Newtons of philosophy and science? Perhaps we shall be told there are *many* such men now; only genius is no longer rare, and individual excellence is lost in the multitude who excel. But who, think you, of this boasted multitude will stand the test which these men have stood — the only sure test, the test

of time? For the true touchstone is, not what *we* think, but what will be thought of the boasted lights of our day by the men of distant generations. Judge only of the future by the past, of the “men of renown” of one generation, who have become men of nothing in the next, and you will not judge amiss.

But, whatever mists of doubt may rest upon futurity as to the national fruits and consequences of our present course, no shade of doubtfulness seems, for a moment, to disturb the self-confidence, and self-complacency, of the age of knowledge in which we live. “The schoolmaster,” we are told, “is abroad;” and to question the certain efficacy of his mechanical instructions; to believe that mere knowledge—“useful knowledge,” so miscalled—may inflate the head, without mending the heart; to maintain that to render any knowledge useful, another and higher principle must precede it, and prepare the way; to hold, and to avow, the doctrine, that useful knowledge is inseparable from religion, and that CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE is the only knowledge which can lastingly benefit mankind;—is, in the judgment of the men of this generation, heresy against reason, and high treason against common sense.

But, however human authorities may set

themselves in array against this unfashionable doctrine; however parliaments may disown, the public press denounce, or "the madness of the people" disobey; let it be remembered — let it never be forgotten — that it has on its side authority of a fashion which can never change, a voice louder and more commanding than the voice of nations, — the authority of revelation AND THE VOICE OF GOD! And this eternal voice it is which now addresses you, my brethren, in the warning words of the text: "Knowledge puffeth up; but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love GOD, the same is known of Him."

The pride of knowledge was the easily-besetting sin of the Corinthian Christians. This plainly appears from the general tenor of both the Epistles addressed to them by Saint Paul; and, very specially, from his apostolic warning in the text. The consequences of this spirit were alike swift and fatal: the good seed of the Gospel — love, gentleness, teachableness, humility — was quickly choked by the tares of vanity and pretension, of arrogance and self-conceit. Authority was disregarded. Every man set up to be his own master, or set up for himself his own teachers. Their Apostle, as for

the instruction of all other churches, and of all succeeding generations, has himself recorded the awful issue. Instead of the blessed fruits of the Redeemer's kingdom — peace, unity, charity, — “envying, and strife, and divisions, and heresies” sprang up among them; and, having ceased to live as Christians, they returned to “walk as men,” even as the children of this world.

Contemplate, my brethren, this picture of the men of Corinth; and honestly ask yourselves, in what respect it differs from the likeness of the men of England in our day. Yes, the ground of this picture, our common nature, is always and everywhere the same; and upon this nature, the same causes will ever produce similar effects. The pride of knowledge is our besetting sin. And are not its bitter fruits the same with those produced of old, by the same vain spirit, in the Church of Corinth? And does not its unchanging action on the heart of man, legible in the whole spirit, and temper, and language of the present day, *now as then*, abundantly verify the Apostle's declaration in the text, “Knowledge puffeth up?”

Nor was it reserved exclusively for inspired wisdom thus to expose the vanity of “knowledge falsely so called;” to teach us the emptiness of self-conceit; to show that great promise is the sure

herald of small performance; that high pretension is the most certain mark of petty attainment; and that a vaunting and vain-glorious age carries within its own bosom living witness of its being an age of small things and little men. Socrates, the wisest of the heathen world, taught this wholesome lesson, long before Saint Paul lived or wrote. When proclaimed, by the Delphic oracle, "the wisest of mankind," he owned, indeed, the justice of the tribute; but added, that, if he was the wisest of men, it was from this sole cause, "that he possessed knowledge enough *to know his own ignorance.*" And this is the very lesson read by Saint Paul in the text: "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

But, while the consentient witness of uninspired and inspired philosophy thus unites to testify, that the knowledge of our ignorance is the first step to wisdom; that to know, and feel, and own ourselves ignorant, and from this consciousness to derive lessons of humbleness of mind, lowliness of heart, self-distrust, and self-abasement, is the only avenue to all true knowledge;—while thus much was taught in common by Socrates and by Saint Paul, it was reserved for the great Apostle of

the Gentiles to rest true knowledge upon its only sure foundation; to rise, from mere negative, to positive attainment; and so to point out to man the way of knowledge, that he may walk therein. And this great discovery and disclosure is made in the concluding words of the text: "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. BUT IF ANY MAN LOVE GOD, THE SAME IS KNOWN OF HIM."

Here, in direct opposition to the vain philosophy of man, in open contrariety to the schemes, and theories, and systems of education advocated at the present day, we have the will of God, proclaimed by the voice of his Apostle; and this is His holy will and law,—that RELIGION must be the root and groundwork of all human knowledge; that without religion all knowledge must be profitless and vain; that the training of the heart must precede the teaching of the head; and that, however senates may legislate, or sovereigns subscribe their laws, no education can be lawful in a Christian land, which has not the love of God for its beginning, and the glory of God for its end. "Knowledge *puffeth up*, but charity *buildeth up*. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

But if any man love GOD, the same is known of him."

And this brings us to the consideration, as a Christian people, of the great and momentous question of NATIONAL EDUCATION; and of the several plans for national education, tried or untried, which now, with an absorbing interest, exercise and divide the minds of men. From the commencement of the year 1839 down to the commencement of the present year*, the threefold question before the people of England was no other than this: I. Whether the education protected by the State is to be an education without religion; or II. Whether the education protected by the State is to be an education with a confusion of all religions; or III. Whether the education protected by the State is to continue to be, what, with great and growing blessings to our land, it hitherto has mainly been, an education identified with the religion of the State; founded on the great first principle, that piety is the only groundwork of all useful knowledge; and conducted under the maternal care of the Church of England, which forms the purest portion of the Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ.

I. The first of these plans, education without

religion, has been plainly proved from the text, and can equally be proved, by the whole tenor of the Old and New Testaments, to be directly contrary to the revealed will and word of GOD.

II. And the second scheme, or education with a confusion of all religions, is like unto the first. If it has less the air of open impiety, it has, nevertheless, all the fearful reality of irreligion. Under the name of liberality, and the semblance of charity, it involves, in truth, the opposite evils of religious intolerance, and religious indifference.

Its first effect, like that of the primeval curse on the post-diluvian world, the confusion of tongues, would inevitably be, instead of uniting, to divide anew, and embitter the divisions of the human family. And this effect, be it observed, would be in exact proportion with the honesty and zeal of the rival teachers of religion. For, so long as the teachers of any religion are honest men,—so long and so far, that is to say, as they themselves believe what they teach,—their diligence and zeal in inculcating *the peculiarities* of their respective creeds, will be proportioned to the degree in which those peculiarities seem to be endangered. But, in a scheme of education which proposes to amalgamate, in the pursuit of secular knowledge, all the various denominations of reli-

gious belief, while it throws open its doors, for the spiritual instruction of their respective followers, indiscriminately to the teachers of every denomination, every honest teacher must, in self-defence, aim to make his pupils controversialists, and each school, consequently, become an arena of theological warfare; to the great increase, doubtless, of the "knowledge that puffeth up," but to the deadly injury of the "charity that edifieth."

Should this great evil, in process of time, pass away, it would be only to give place to a greater and a worse. Accustomed, from infancy, to see every religious denomination alike countenanced, or rather alike contemned, by the State; familiarized, by daily contact, with all kinds and extravagances of religious opinion; will the child, think you, as he grows up into manhood, be likely long to retain his regard for his own specific creed? Too commonly, it is to be apprehended, he will not. Indifference about the religion of others, will gradually produce indifference about his own; and the education which may have given birth, at the outset, to the spirit of intolerance and uncharitableness, may end in the production of open impiety, and total unbelief.

But what, it should be inquired, will be, too probably, *the morals* of a set of schoolmasters,

chosen altogether irrespectively of their religion? As it is, to secure morality, in making the selection, is sufficiently difficult. How must not the difficulty be increased, when the mainspring of all Christian morality, *religion*, is out of the question? Woe be to this, or to any nation, which makes science the sole guardian of the morals of youth!

Yet, after all, it is the merest folly to talk of the exclusion of religion from any system of education. MAN is a religious being. And so surely as the true religion is shut out from the school at one door, every variety of false religion will enter by another. From the schismatic to the heretic, from the Arian to the Unitarian (whose difference of creeds is like their difference of names, *a unit only* between), nay, from these deists to the veriest atheist, every teacher of the alphabet, for every man, has his creed. And what Orders in Council, or Acts of Parliament, can close the lips of these men? Who shall prevent their pupils from becoming their proselytes? What human laws can restrict or regulate the *secret* agency of their unholy zeal, or the more sure, though silent influence of their bad example? No, my brethren, let your schools be once abandoned to the tender mercies of mere men of science, and their unhappy

inmates will quickly be initiated in every mode of infidelity, and every form of vice !

III. From this review of the prospective consequences of a scheme of national education, resting upon either of the false principles which have been now briefly exposed (a review, be it remembered, founded, not like the schemes which it exposes, on a visionary theory, but on unchangeable principles, on the force of habit, the tendencies of human nature, and the experience of human life), we turn to a refreshing contrast, — to the contemplation of a plan, the good and happy consequences of which are already known and tried ; a system of national education, grounded upon the principle of special religious instruction, and emanating from the national Church. And here I am prepared to show, not merely that the place which the Church of England occupies, as the religion of the sovereign and the law, gives her a paramount claim to the office of national instructress, but that *she* possesses fitness for this high office, unpossessed by any or all of those religious denominations, whose only bond of union consists in their defection from their allegiance to this venerable parent ; and who find a shelter under the wings of her evangelic charity, unknown to the separatists of any other part of Europe. Yes, to return to *the*

Gospel law of education laid down in the text, I am ready to maintain, from the very nature of the case, that the episcopal and apostolic Church of England possesses means of promoting, and the will to promote, "the charity that edifieth," as opposed to "the knowledge that puffeth up," to an extent in which no sectarian or separatist bodies ever did or ever can possess them.

With those who name the name, only to deny the Divine nature of Christ, I shall not here intermeddle, further than to observe, that they call themselves, what we cannot call them, Christians. But for the conscientious dissenter from the discipline of our Church we may justly entertain respect, the respect due to mistaken honesty. With all due respect, however, for our separated brethren (and the respect expressed is most unfeignedly felt), I must claim permission to remark, that, however numerous or eminent the examples of individual piety, dissent of every denomination is, in its origin and essence, a religion of knowledge, as distinguished from a religion of charity. For every dissenter is, of necessity, a separatist from a prior communion; and, from the mere fact of separation, *controversy* becomes a prime element and law of his religion. To know why he separated, and to justify his separation to himself and

others, is his first concern: to learn so to walk as Christians ought to walk, is, in the necessary order of his training, a later consideration. The natural consequence of this posture of the mind would be, a pride of intellect, an exercise of private judgment, a leaning to men's own understanding, and a disposition to swell the few points of difference, instead of dwelling on the many principles of agreement,—all far more nearly allied to “the knowledge that puffeth up,” than to “the charity that edifieth.” Look at the generic character of the dissenting portion of our community, and ask yourselves whether the natural consequences have not been, to a great extent, the actual consequences of separation. Even in the best and most pious of our dissenting brethren, with rare exceptions, may unequivocally be discerned, that, in their training, knowledge had preceded love; while, in the mass of their communities, the pride of fancied knowledge may be seen in the carriage, read in the eye, heard in the voice, and felt in the whole conversation. The fact is noticed charitably, and not invidiously, as the fault of the system, not of the individuals who compose it.

Compare this posture of mind, and state or things, with the character and temper of Church of England Christianity; and then judge for your-

selves to what communion this Christian State should confide the education of this Christian people. Ascending for her origin to the earliest ages of Christianity, owning for her ministers the lineal and legitimate successors of the Apostles, breathing in her whole liturgy and services the pure piety of ancient times, the hierarchical Church of England has never separated from the Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ. The happy consequence is, that the religion of her children is a religion, not of knowledge, but of love. Her litany, her collects, her communion service, her prayers for the living, and her thanksgivings for the dead, all breathe the spirit, not of the knowledge that puffeth up, but of the charity that edifieth. With no temptations to the indulgence of an unworthy jealousy (for what Church or communion under heaven can the Church of England be jealous of ?), she has no lower use for the weapons of controversy, than the guardianship of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. Yet, when this truth has been assailed by the enemies of all righteousness, where have weapons of higher temper been found than in her arsenals? where champions of a holier prowess, than within the circuit of her island walls? But controversy, my

brethren, is not her element: HER ELEMENT IS LOVE.

Such is the Church, and such the training, from which, in the year 1839, the State was called upon virtually to withdraw the people of England. But had the State, in an unhappy hour, listened to the unhallowed call, and the Dagon of knowledge been substituted for the God of Love, and our children been summoned to fall down and worship, it still would have remained to be tried, whether the people of England would have listened to the State; whether, when the law of God has clearly spoken, England, Christian England, would have allowed the laws of puny man to prevail against it.

In the important interval of eight years, however, a breathing-time has providentially been given, which, under God, has manifestly had a salutary influence upon the minds of some, at least, among our public men. And an altered and improved spirit of legislation upon this momentous subject has marked the opening of the present year. For the fearful alternatives of education without religion, or education with a confusion of all religions, the great first principle, that NATIONAL EDUCATION IS INSEPARABLE FROM RELIGION, has been not only recognized, but uncompromisingly advocated, by the highest functionary of the

State. By the first minister of the crown, in his place in Parliament, this doctrine has been laid down in terms worthy of the first minister of this great Christian country. "I think that for the State to take cognizance of secular matters only; to take upon itself only one part, *and that not the most important*; to omit altogether the duty, and the conscience; and teach nothing about the love of God, and the love of our neighbour, as a part of school discipline, is, in my mind, a serious, a grievous, an irreparable fault. I think that no unity among sects, in a system of secular learning, could at all compensate for the absence of all religious instruction. Besides, suppose this objection, *which stands in the front of such a scheme*, were overruled,—the working-classes of this country, seeing *how* the time of their children was occupied, would be apt to consider religion as thrown aside by the State. Such a scheme would not be acceptable to parliament, *and far less so to the people*; who would confound the *omission of religion*, with a declaration of *irreligion*. I may be wrong in that interpretation, but yet I think that the public feeling would at once put an end to any scheme proposed on such a foundation."*

Compare this language, and this spirit, with the

* See Final Note.

language and spirit prevalent, both in and out of parliament, a few short years ago; and let us render humble and hearty thanks to HIM, who alone can order aright the wills, and words, and counsels, of men and nations, — of the rulers, and the ruled! Upon another point, of not less vital moment in this question, we are equally bound to be thankful: the recognition, I mean, by the Legislature, of the authorized version of the Holy Scriptures, as *the only version* admissible into schools, in any way countenanced, or in any measure supported, by the state. Let me not, however, be mistaken. Let none, for a moment, suppose me to imply, because *so much* is *so right*, in the measures in contemplation, that, therefore, there is nothing doubtful, nothing wrong. However humble in themselves, my thoughts upon this theme are far otherwise. Some things there are, which the Church must deprecate: one thing there is, which she must unfeignedly deplore: namely, any attempt to force upon Church schools professed dissenters, to be admitted as such.

I speak as a Church-of-England clergyman, to a Church-of-England congregation, who are bound in conscience to believe the religion which they profess to be the best and purest form of Christianity. I speak in the metropolitical cathedral of England, of which for so many years I have been

an humble member; and standing where I do, I would shield my dissent and protest under the authority of a man *entitled to be heard*; under the authority of a senator who glories in the name of a Church-of-England Christian; of one who, in the long and faithful discharge of his high trust, as representative, in our legislature, of the University of Oxford, has earned for himself a title more honourable far than the time-honoured title of "Champion of England," that, namely, of Champion of our Protestant Constitution in Church and State.

"I retain (this high authority is reported to have said), I retain, *as strongly as ever*, my conviction, that it is *to the Church, and to the Church exclusively*, that the State should delegate any portion of its resources, for such a purpose (as that of national education). I am content to take the plan of Her Majesty's Government, I will not say fearlessly, but faithfully. I think the plan greatly superior to any plan that could have been expected from any other combination of parties. I believe the plan of the Government to have introduced into the system of education a series of very considerable improvements. I agree, so far, with the plan, and with the speech, of the Noble Lord. To the details of that speech, I do not desire particularly to allude. But I must refer, for a moment,

to one portion of it (namely, the assertion), that the Church had never claimed the right, or exercised the duty, of educating the people. Now I must beg to observe, that, *long before any dissent existed in England*, THE CHURCH WAS THE GREAT EDUCATOR OF THE PEOPLE; and, when my Noble Friend spoke of the close of the last century, as the commencement of their efforts to promote education, I must ask him, whether, prior to that period, there was found any large collection of schools, except those which were promoted by the Church herself. I believe I might say, and without fear of contradiction, *that all the Grammar Schools of England* [including, let us, my Brethren, remember with home-felt thankfulness, our own noble foundation, the King's School of Canterbury] were founded by members of the Church of England; and that, up to a recent period, hardly any portion of the education of the people was claimed by the Dissenters."

This triumphant vindication of the Church of England, as the sole fount and origin of national education, in her early foundations of our grammar-schools, must find an echo in every honest heart, while we recall to mind that, now as then, she approves herself the sole true national instructress of the people; that, in the nineteenth century, she again stood forth *alone* (at the call of a layman, whose praise is in the churches, and who is as far

above all other praise as beyond all earthly reward) the foundress of a vast plan of NATIONAL EDUCATION, ON A NATIONAL SCALE, BY OUR NATIONAL CHURCH. Had the State, from the memorable year 1811, wisely and worthily seconded that glorious undertaking, what might not be the happy state of England now? But it was ordered otherwise. The Church of England was left to realize her vast conception alone and unaided. For the limitations of her project, others have to answer: its merits, and its success, under Providence, are all her own. With the establishment, in the year 1811, of the National Society, and of our Church-of-England national schools, first arose that cry and clamour, in other quarters, upon the subject of national education, which now, like a rushing torrent, overspreads the whole land. In the rush of this mighty torrent, its origin seems forgotten. But, when dissent now steps in between the Church of England and her rightful claims; when our separated brethren would effect a divorce between her own sectional education and our national Church, by laying hands on public funds created, under Providence, by the spirit and example of Church-of-England Christianity, what is it (I say it uninvincibly) but the attendant following in the lion's train?

But it is for the State to decide all such questions: with the Church it remains only to protest and to submit. For the conscience of the State, happily, *she* has not to answer: she is answerable solely for her own. The only concern of the Church of England, at this great crisis, is with her own principles and duties. And the only question open to her is, the course which a faithful adherence to those principles, and performance of those duties, may, henceforward, bind her to pursue. In shaping that course, she will need all human circumspection; and will need, still more, to implore all heavenly guidance and care. For never, in her long and eventful annals, was there a time, when the wisdom of the serpent would seem more needful, to preserve and protect the harmlessness of the dove.

What her course, under present or prospective circumstances, ought to be, it would be presumptuous in any individual to lay down. But happily, in substance, it is already laid down to our hand, by her own substantive character, and her own specific faith. Standing, then, upon the rock of that character, and building up only upon the foundation of this faith, the Church of England can never, lawfully, have anything to say to any but *Church-of-England national education*. Were she once to quit this high and holy ground, her sun is set, — “her candlestick taken away,” for ever!

Nor is any limit placed, by this golden rule, to the zeal of her charity, or to the field of her exertions. By the ancient and unrepealed laws of England, the whole nation are her children : some, unhappily, “erring children,” tolerated wanderers from her fold ; but, therefore, only the more the subjects of her compassion, and the objects of her prayers. Her churches, her schools, are open unto all, who are willing to hearken to the sound doctrine, and pure practice, therein taught. If any be unwilling so to hearken, the fault is not hers, but their own. If any will not receive the education which alone she can give, she does them no wrong ; let them seek their education elsewhere. Her faith she forces upon none : but *her* concern is solely with her own children, or with those who, for the benefits of a pure Christian training, are willing, for the time at least, to be received as such. Her ground, here, is purely self-defensive : it is essential to the safety of her own sons. For once throw open her school-doors to *education without specific religion*, and *education without religion* will follow in the train : not only the dissenter from her discipline (who confessedly can plead no conscientious scruples about her doctrine), but the Socinian, the deist, nay the very atheist, will enter in the persons of their unhappy children, silently to confound, by

their presence, in the minds and apprehensions of her youth, all *religious* and all *irreligious* distinctions whatsoever; and practically to teach (to apply words from a high authority already cited) that specific religion is thrown aside, not by the State only, BUT BY THE CHURCH.

Whatever, therefore, may be the conscience of the State in this matter, let her beware how she attempts to force the conscience of the Church; the conscience, in other words, of above three-fourths of the people. Should, however (which may God of his mercy forbid!), the attempt be made, it is devoutly to be hoped, that it will be met by the Church of England in the spirit of her own sainted martyrs and confessors of old; that the Church of England, in the nineteenth century, will teach admiring Christendom, that her martyrs and her confessors have neither lived nor died in vain.

FINAL NOTE.

It is deeply painful to find "necessity laid upon us" of contrasting, with the language of a speech thus breathing the true spirit of a Christian statesman, the course subsequently pursued, and still (February, 1853) persevered in, by the same responsible authority, for the purpose of *unchristianizing* the legislature of this great

country. If Britain, as an empire, is sought to be made no longer Christian, at least let the blow be struck openly, let not such a revolution be perpetrated by a "side-wind." In a measure which, by the proposed omission from our legislative test of the clause "on the true faith of a Christian," (to apply the just and forcible words of the noble mover on another occasion,) would teach the people "to confound the omission of religion with a declaration of irreligion," why begin by the advocacy of *ex parte* claims? why not, at once and openly, associate the Mahometan with the Jew? rather, why not give the Mahometan the lead, since he owns and honours "the name of the Lord Jesus," which it is the conscience of the Jew to deny and revile? or else, why not boldly tell the people of England, that you purposely pass over the claims of those, who after a manner are friendly to Christianity, receiving its author as a great prophet, nay as more than man, and the Scriptures of the New Testament as the word of God,— in order to adopt and habilitate the *enemies* of Christ? It is right to ask, but needless to answer these questions: they are answered beforehand in the words ascribed to the Noble Lord, — "BECAUSE THE PUBLIC FEELING WOULD, AT ONCE, PUT AN END TO ANY SCHEME PROPOSED ON SUCH A FOUNDATION."

But there is an appeal to something higher than "the public feeling;" a more dread tribunal than any *man* can raise; with reference to which, our rulers, and our legislators, are alike exhorted to beware, lest, in the pride of human wisdom, they bring themselves under the prophetic guilt and condemnation written, more especially, for their warning: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord, AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST!"

SERMON II.

NATIONAL EDUCATION INSEPARABLE FROM THE CHURCH.

PROVERBS, xxii. 6.

*“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old
he will not depart from it.”*

Few passages of the Old Testament are more familiar than the words of Solomon in the text. It by no means however follows that the most familiar passages of Scripture are always, or generally, those best understood. The text before us, on examination, may be found an example in point. For how has this passage been commonly interpreted? Has it not been explained by many commentators, both Hebrew and Christian, and understood by most readers of “the Scriptures of truth,” simply as a counsel and encouragement of a general kind, addressed to parents, and other guardians and instructors of youth, to bring up children in the paths of piety and virtue; on the principle (a principle admitted even in the

heathen world), that new vessels are sure long to retain the fragrance of the odours with which they have been first imbued; in other words, that our earliest impressions are those most likely to prove lasting, and that the precious seed of religion and good morals, if wisely sown in infancy, "shall" (as the psalmist has it) "still bring forth fruit in old age."

It may freely be admitted, that, so far as it goes, this interpretation is, in a measure, just and true; but so far is it from containing the whole truth, that, on a nearer approach, like all vague generalities, it will be found to contain a most faint and imperfect adumbration of it. For, while it obviously abandons to the private judgment of parents and instructors not only the training of the child, but the choosing of the way, thus leaving each individual teacher to set up his own standard of morals and religion, it altogether overlooks the very first step towards a right understanding of the counsel in the text. The first step towards any right apprehension of this counsel plainly is, *due reflection on the place and circumstances of the inspired penman through whom it is given.*

Now the counsel in the text was given, not only by one gifted beyond all his fellows with wisdom

from above, but by one specially chosen by Jehovah to be the builder and dedicator of His first temple at Jerusalem, and the founder and establisher of the Jewish Church in that more full and seemly order in which it was to continue until finally superseded by the Christian. During the long course of ages which intervened between Moses and Solomon, the holy ark of the covenant, the earthly presence-chamber of the King of Heaven, had remained in tents, or been removed from house to house, without any fixed or certain dwelling-place. To David, indeed, it was permitted to find, on the holy hill of Zion, "a place for the Lord;" but to his more favoured son and successor was reserved the glorious privilege of erecting "an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." By King Solomon, the ark of God was first placed within an earthly sanctuary; that sanctuary encircled by a glorious temple; and that temple filled with holy services, and thronged with prostrate worshippers. Within its consecrated walls, in presence of the assembled Jewish Church, priests, Levites, and people, arrayed in their several orders, by him was pronounced that prayer of dedication, by which all the best benefits and blessings of the Jews' religion were, from henceforth, associated with their temple worship; by which the

answer of the Almighty hearer of prayer was inseparably connected with the supplications of his people Israel, offered there; while, for the absent Israelite, the stranger in a foreign, or the captive in a hostile land, was sought and secured the same inestimable privilege, when they should "pray towards that holy place."

It is only when we know the mind of a writer, that we can enter fully into his meaning; and it was from a mind stored with hallowing thoughts and recollections such as these, that the great monarch of Israel, in the words of the Text, spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. The knowledge, therefore; that these words are the words of King Solomon, is alone our sufficient guide to the knowledge of them in all the fulness of their deep and pregnant meaning. "To train up a child in the way he should go," was, in his view, not only to bring him up in the knowledge, fear, and love of the only true God, but to bring him up in that holy knowledge, fear, and love, through the instrumentality of that God's own appointed means of grace and of salvation: "To train up a child in the way he should go," was to accustom him, from the earliest beginnings of infant consciousness, to the glorious sights, the thrilling sounds, the high emotions, awakened then, when assembled Israel

worshipped the God of their fathers, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," in his own holy temple: "To train up a child in the way he should go," was so to instruct and institute him, from the first dawn of reason and conscience, in those holy services, that that knowledge of God, which, like himself, can have no end, should, like himself, appear to have had no beginning; that no point or period should be discernible in the map of memory, in which God was unknown, or religion unregarded: "To train up a child in the way he should go," was to lead infant innocence, from the very day of its presentation and dedication unto the Lord God in his temple, first to see with the eyes, next to feel with the heart, and lastly to celebrate with the understanding, the services and sacrifices, the prayers and praises, the songs and thanksgivings, in which Israel of old "met to magnify the Lord, and to exalt his name together," in "the great congregation:" finally, to train up a child in the way he should go, was to provide, by the united influences of precept and example, that each youthful Israelite should grow up "an Israelite indeed," a true temple worshipper; that, in person or in spirit, he should serve Jehovah in his temple night and day; that it should become, with advancing years, the supreme desire

and the very joy of his heart, "to enter into its gates with thanksgivings, and into its courts with praise." This, and this alone, is the training spoken of by Solomon in the text; and to this training, and to it only, is annexed its promised blessing and reward, "and when he is old he will not depart from it:" a reward and blessing thus beautifully expanded in the ninety-second Psalm: "The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree; and shall spread abroad like a cedar in Libanus: those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God: they also shall bring forth *more* fruit in their age."

If from the explanation of the text thus irresistibly suggested, by our knowledge of the mind and circumstances of its inspired author, we turn to the explanation independently supplied by Scriptural facts and examples, it will be only to reach the same conclusion by a different process. In the history of God's chosen people, from the time of the dedication of the First, to that of the final ruin of the Second Temple, we meet a living commentary on our interpretation of this text, in the recorded lives and habits of devoutly-trained Israelites; whose uniform characteristic, amidst all diversities of time and place, of sex and age, of

prosperous or adverse fortunes, was that of *temple-worshippers*, and who, in all the changes and chances of this mortal life, still found the worship of Jehovah in or towards his holy temple the joy of their youth, the support of their manhood, and the crown and consolation of their good old age. Was the faithful Israelite in prosperity and peace, his resort was the Temple, and the language of his heart that of the Royal Psalmist, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Was he in adversity or affliction, his refuge was the Temple, and the prayer of his soul the prophetic prayer of David: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord." Was the faithful Israelite absent in the body from Jerusalem, his recorded petitions disclose a spirit centered there: "I will worship *towards thy holy temple*, and praise thy name because of thy

loving kindness and truth." Was the faithful Israelite a stranger and a captive in a heathen and hostile land, exposed to the terrors of persecution, and the dread of death, his never-failing resource is recorded in the example of Daniel, who, amidst this accumulation of calamities, "went into his house, and, his windows being open in his chamber *towards Jerusalem*, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Lastly, had the faithful Israelite reached to an extreme old age, the blessed employments of that old age are written in the everlasting Gospel, are there exemplified in those true temple-worshippers, the venerable Simeon and the aged Anna; Simeon, who, "waiting for the consolation of Israel," lived to find that consolation, where doubtless he through life had sought it, *in the temple*; Anna, a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God, with fastings and prayers, night and day." These chosen witnesses of our Lord's presentation bear a closing and triumphant witness to the meaning of Solomon in the text: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is *old* he will *not depart from it*."

Such, then, is the full meaning, and only just interpretation, of the text, as doubly established,

by the known spirit and associations of its inspired author, and by the recorded lives and habits, in after-ages of the Jewish polity, of "Israelites indeed," of all (to use the Apostle's expressive words) "who were Jews inwardly, whose circumcision was that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise was not of men, but of God."

But the Jewish polity, in all its higher and better parts, is the type and shadow of the Christian; the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Triune God of the New, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Revelations emanating alike from Him, must be at unity between themselves; they cannot be essentially contrary; they can differ only in degree; "for God is not the author of confusion, but of order, as *in all churches of the saints*." Christianity, therefore, has been well and wisely defined, in our own day, by a late great Christian philosopher, as "analogical Judaism." Thus the Jewish high priest was taken away, only to be superseded by that great High Priest "who is set down for ever at the right hand of God." The Jewish priesthood was done away, only to give place (as Saint Paul most distinctly intimates) to a spiritual priesthood. The Jewish temple was removed, only to be replaced, throughout all the world, by holier temples. The Jewish sacrifices

were abolished, only by being for ever absorbed in that great sacrifice which they were instituted to prefigure, the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, and in those sacraments in which that sacrifice is at once spiritually represented and embodied.

The training of childhood, consequently, proclaimed by Solomon in the text, as the law of God to all Jewish parents, applies in its whole pregnant scope and meaning to us Christians: only with a force and fulness as far transcending its primary application, as the Church under the everlasting Gospel transcends the Church under the abrogated law. In the Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, therefore, "to train up a child in the way he should go," is so to lead him on from the font and waters of baptism, that the grace given in baptism shall never be forfeited nor forgotten: "to train up a child in the way he should go," is, wisely and gently to lead the opening mind and heart, as those of Timothy were led, through Scripture to the Church, and through the Church to a right understanding of the Scriptures: "to train up a child in the way he should go," is, by precept and example (under the Divine blessing), to make the house of God the very home of his heart; the holy services of that house his ever-growing pleasure and delight; and a devout familiarity with those

services, his ever-present safeguard and resource, amidst the trials and temptations, the perils and dangers, the sufferings and sorrows, of this treacherous and troublesome world.

If, where the precept of the text was fulfilled, the promise of the text held good—as we have seen it delightfully hold good—in the case of Jewish childhood; in the Christian child thus early and wisely “trained in the way he should go,” who, my brethren, that names the name of Christ, can doubt the blessedness of the result—that, “when he is old he will not depart from it?”

But if, on due performance of its appointed condition, the promise of God in the text stands thus eminently assured to the Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, throughout the world,—how pre-eminently, on due performance of the condition, must not that promise stand assured to its best, its purest, its most catholic portion, our own venerable mother, the Church of England.

In the application of the text to all faithful members of such a communion, “to train up a child in the way he should go,” is so to lead on infant innocence from the font and waters of baptism, that baptismal grace may prove, what it was given of God to prove, a growing blessing; a leaven which shall leaven the whole inner man:

“to train up a child of the Church of England in the way he should go, is, through her appointed teaching, so to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” that each celebration of the holy sacrament of baptism, which he shall witness in after-life, may recall savingly to his mind, and renew savingly in his heart, his own baptismal covenant and vows; may lead him (in the inimitable language of our Litany) practically to remember “that baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him; that as he died, and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living:” “to train up a child of the Church of England in the way he should go,” is to secure by good and timely precept and example, that, in all her services, he shall conduct himself as the dutiful and loving son of that most venerable parent; that his *outward reverence* shall express his inward devotion; that the homage rendered unto God on his bodily knees shall bear witness, before men, to the better homage rendered upon the knees of his heart: finally, “to train up a child of the Church of England in the

way he should go," is to provide that, next to and with the Holy Scriptures, he shall so "hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest," that best of human manuals, her book of Common Prayer, that each prayer, each thanksgiving, each collect of our matchless Liturgy, may be estimated at its true value; and the whole stored up in his mind and memory, as his support "in all time of his tribulation," his safeguard "in all time of his wealth," his best preparation to meet, unappalled, the hour of death, and to stand before his God "in the day of judgment."

Such, my Brethren, before, beside, above all other teaching, is the education which we, as sons of the Church of England, stand pledged to give our children, if we would secure to them, and to their children's children, the promised blessing of the text: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." For it is only where the knowledge of God is thus made the spring and fountain-head of all other knowledge, that any other knowledge can be good for man; as saith the Apostle, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity buildeth up; and if any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know; but if any man love God, the same is known of him;" or, as was nobly said

by a great uninspired authority already alluded to (one worthy to follow and to comment on Saint Paul) treating on this very theme, and the utter nothingness of the highest reaches and attainments of the human mind, unless emanating from or ministering to the knowledge and the love of God : — “ If in the rivulets which trickle down amidst these intellectual Alps and Apennines, I could discover no connection with that river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, I own that I should look upon them with as little interest as upon the rocky fragments through which they passed.”

From an education such as this, will naturally and necessarily flow, in fair succession, all the duties and all the charities of life; while to every exercise and attainment of the mind of man, from the knowledge of the alphabet to the loftiest reaches of thought and science, it will impart a soberness, a sacredness, a tendency and direction heavenward, all its own.

But while thus engaged as sons of the Church of England to provide early and wisely for the evangelic education (I use the term “evangelic” in its old and only legitimate sense) of our own, and through our own of our children’s children, there remains a vast and daily increasing proportion of her overflowing population by whom no such pro-

vision can, or at least will be made. You will anticipate my reference to our labouring and manufacturing poor. That the poor shall never cease out of the land, is a divine declaration of large and pregnant meaning. Under the New Testament dispensation, more especially, it implies the bounden duty of all, whom God in his providence has blest with competence or abundance, to minister of their substance, each man according to his ability, not merely to the bodily wants, but, still more, to the mental, the moral, and the spiritual necessities of the poor, who are represented by our Saviour Christ himself as peculiarly objects of his divine office and ministry; the last and highest sign of which, in his answer to the inquiry of Saint John Baptist, was this, "Unto the poor the Gospel is preached." What tender care must not these words instil into the hearts of all who duly weigh them, for the children of the poor, to whom that Gospel can be effectually preached only by early religious training, and who can obtain that training in no other way than through their Christian bounty and mercy?

For the well-ordered exercise of that bounty and mercy, the National School system has long opened a field commensurate with the whole length and breadth of our land: a system emanating from

those who love the Church of England for her own good sake, as the best and purest portion of the Church of Christ under heaven; who see, in that Church, no fabric of merely human workmanship, but a goodly temple, fashioned, established, preserved unimpaired by the high providence of God, not only to be the tender and loving mother of her own children, but to be (what, in this our day, she has so nobly proved herself) the fruitful nursing-mother of future Churches throughout the world, to the end of time. The children instructed and instituted under such a system are secure, under God, of a true Church-of-England training: in other words, are secure, if it be not their own fault, of realizing that picture which has been already faintly drawn, of the blessed fulfilment of the promise in the text, as attainable under the guidance, from early youth, of Church-of-England Christianity. For the National School system originated with sons of the Church of England worthy of the name: men who, by no microscopic magnification of imaginary flaws could be persuaded to discover in that glorious temple "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" whose ripe experience could detect the restless spirit of innovation, no less in a false appetite for the curious revival of obsolete, than in an unslakable thirst for the captious revision of

authorized, formularies; who knew, from the past history of Christendom in the East and in the West, that unwisely to neglect, or painfully to multiply, the *circumstances*, is always to endanger the precious substance of religion; who, in that golden standard of her faith, the Prayer-Book of the Church of England, could wish nothing added, nothing altered, nothing done away; and who, with one of the least and humblest of her sons, can find adequate expression for their estimate of that precious volume, only in the words of one of her great departed lights: "I know no prayer necessary that is not in the Liturgy, but one, which is this: that God would vouchsafe to continue the Liturgy itself in use, honour, and veneration, in this Church for ever." Amen.

SERMON III.

ASH-WEDNESDAY.

SAINT MARK, i. 14, 15.

“ Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel.”

It is a truth so familiar to us, as, from its very familiarity, to appear a truism, that God, in all things, works by means: that, throughout the whole circle of the Divine economy, both physical and moral, in his kingdoms of nature and of grace, INSTRUMENTALITY is the self-directing law of Him, “ who giveth life, and breath, and all things;” and from whom alone, as their ever-flowing source and fountain, “ cometh down every good, and every perfect gift.”

But while the recognition and application of this fundamental law of the Divine government, is the first principle of all discoveries in nature, and of all proficienciy in science and in arts,—it may be more than questioned whether the law itself is

practically acknowledged and acted on at all in the same measure, or to the same effect, in things spiritual, as in things natural : in other words, whether, not in profession only, but in practice, we deal with the spiritual, as we do with the natural world ; regarding *instrumentality* to be alike the rule of the Divine government in both ; and the means of grace, consequently, to be as essential to our progress in Divine knowledge, as the laws of nature to our proficiency in human science.

If the matter be honestly and seriously examined into, it will be found that, generally speaking, men do not : that with too many, even of conscientious members of the visible Church, "*means*" have not the same sense, the same significancy, the same necessary place, and the same allowed potentiality, in the great work of salvation, as they undisputedly and indisputably hold in the world of science.

Now "if these things be so ;" if a right use of the means of grace be as essential "to life and godliness," as a right use of the laws of nature to art and science, yet, in practice, be by no means commensurately employed ; if neglected truths be the most important of all truths ; and if the truth here at stake be, intrinsically, of the very last and highest importance, — the subject, assuredly, is one

to which the preacher of the Gospel cannot too deeply direct his own attention, or too strongly invite the most serious attention of his hearers.

But here, before we proceed further with the general subject, I would notice and meet the evil delusion (a delusion widely prevalent among certain classes of our population), which would argue from the abuse to the disuse of the means of grace; and attempt to justify, by appeal to the sins of commission in others, their own sins of omission. Inconsistency between the lives, and the religious observances, of some, who may be seen to live in the practice of all the appointed means of grace, is the well-known pretext urged and acted on by many, especially among our lower classes, to excuse or justify their own disuse of ordinances; above all, their disobedience to the latest and highest injunction of their Saviour Christ, in the rejection of that Sacrament of His body and blood, of which he has himself commanded "ALL" to be partakers. Of this one great sin of omission, a sin extending far beyond the pale of ignorance, and of the vulgar many, may it not rather be said, in the words of a Church-of-England divine, "This is not disobedience, but rebellion: 'tis disclaiming the sovereignty of Christ, and renouncing all allegiance to His authority." Now the notion that would seem to

lie in the secret hearts of all non-communicants is this, —that means, in the nature of the case, being liable to abuse, cannot be essential to salvation; at least this, or some equivalent fallacy, must be supposed to operate in the breasts of all non-communicants who believe in Christianity, since it cannot be supposed that they would reject the ordinance, at the known loss, or risk, of their eternal salvation. To all such-like sophistry of the heart of man, whether in confounding the means with the end, or in divorcing the means from the end, there is one short and plain answer: namely, that while, on the one hand, it is fully to be admitted that the means of grace, alone, cannot save us, on the other hand, it is faithfully to be maintained, that without the means of grace we cannot be saved: I mean, that, without the devout and diligent use of all God's appointed means of grace, we have no Gospel hope or promise of salvation.

Of the highest of those means, the two Holy Sacraments, I would, in the next place, observe, that in this respect they come before the laws of nature, that, instead of being the deductions of "man's wisdom" from God's works, they are instituted and ordained by God our Saviour himself, as his own appointed means for the accomplishment of his own divine end. In this view, who that

worthily names the name of Christ can doubt, that, if only the means be rightly used, the end will infallibly be accomplished ; and these Divine means of grace become, to every faithful recipient, “ the power of God unto salvation.”

It would be an imperfect and inadequate view, however, of the means of grace, which would limit them to the sacraments and services of the Church, together with the prayerful study of God’s holy word. For times and seasons, as well as sacraments and services, are among His appointed means of grace. This first was manifested at the hour of man’s creation, in the virtual institution of the sabbath day ; an implied ordainment self-evidently marking the need, even “ in the time of man’s innocence,” of set times of peculiar “ holiness unto the Lord,” of periodical returns of rest, even from the happy labours of Paradise, in order to a nearer and closer communion of unfallen man with his Maker. Whatever was mysterious in this Divine example and appointment, thus much was clear,—the needfulness to man, in accordance with the nature which God had given him, of stated and recurring periods of thought, of meditation, of devotion, which should shed their hallowing influences over the whole of time. And as it was with days at the period of the creation, so was it with seasons in

after times. As a day of rest was, from the first, set apart to spread its holy influence over each successive week, so, in the Jewish dispensation, seasons were divinely consecrated, to diffuse, as it were, their hallowing effects over every successive year. And what the Feasts of the Passover and of Pentecost were under the Mosaic Law, the seasons of Advent and Lent, of Easter and Whitsuntide, became under the Gospel Covenant; times, by their stated returns, and solemn associations, periodically recalling the minds of men to renewed seriousness, to increased thoughtfulness, to more fervent and therefore more effectual prayer, and thereby spreading their own holy and happy influences over each succeeding Christian year. Such were the design and origin of those holy seasons, which, instituted at its foundation, have been kept in all ages throughout the universal Church, and have been transmitted to us, my brethren, faithfully in our own. And what true member of the Church of England can doubt—what true Christian has not experienced—that such times and such seasons, wisely and Christianly employed, are, what they were ordained to be, powerful means of grace?

Thoughts like these, profitable at all times, are peculiarly appropriate at this solemn season, and on this most solemn day. On this day we enter once

more upon the season of Lent ; a time, through all ages of the universal Church, more especially set apart for the great work of repentance, of amendment of life, of the practical renewal of our baptismal covenant and vows, through the instrumentality of humiliation, fasting, and prayer. From the joyful contemplation of the preceding season of Advent, of its bright and blessed circumstances, its glorious recollections, and its still more glorious hopes and anticipations, we are this day summoned to behold and commemorate the same Saviour of the world, in altered form, and in an opposite view. From the first Gospel-scene of "the babe"—the infant Immanuel—"lying in a manger," but hailed by angels and worshipped by kings, we are called to contemplate the blessed Jesus, now "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," on the scene of his "temptation," of his first great conflict with the enemy of God and man. Like Christ, and after his Divine example, as Christians we are called to encounter the same deadly enemy, to resist all his wiles, to repel all his temptations, and "manfully to fight against the world, the devil, and the flesh." Like Him, in a word, we are this day "carried," as it were, "by the Spirit into the wilderness for forty days," there not only to contemplate, but to accom-

pany, to follow, to copy Him "who was in all points tempted like as we are, but without sin."

Such, my brethren, was the design and object of the primitive Church, when first she set apart this holy season of Lent; and it is only by keeping her design and object seriously and prayerfully in view, that we, her children's children, can hope to keep the Fast, as their Apostle exhorts the Corinthian Christians to keep the Feast, "not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

If viewed in this light, and kept in this spirit, can any reflecting member of the Church of Christ question, that the season of Lent may be a powerful means of grace, that its solemn thoughts and exercises must at least tend "to break up and better the soil of the human heart? But in order that the tillage of this naturally barren soil may be well and wisely carried on, until the seed sown in the tears of repentance shall bear an abundant harvest of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," it is plainly essential that the husbandmen (that is, every individual Christian labourer) should thoroughly understand their work; should know both what they ought to do, and how they ought

to do it, so as duly to prepare and make ready the fallow soil, the soil of their own hearts.

It is with this purpose that I would now invite your most serious attention and my own to the main design and end, and to the attendant duties and exercises of the present season, the spring-time and seed-time of the Christian year.

Lent, then, comparatively with the other Christian seasons, may be defined comprehensively in few words as "THE SEASON OF REPENTANCE." Or, as it is expressed by the sense of the Church Catholic, in the words of her best and purest portion, the Church of England, "That we, and all her children, may be moved to true and earnest repentance," is the end proposed in her solemn Communion Service. And in her Collect for Ash-Wednesday, this all-important end is thus sought after and supplicated, in the accounts of "fervent and effectual prayer:" "Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent, create and make in us new and contrite hearts; that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

“The doctrine of repentance for the remission of sins,” is, therefore, that part and duty of our holy calling, which this day, and this season, specially invite us to consider. And here one very serious misconception has to be met and dealt with at the outset; a misconception which, it may too justly be apprehended, very generally prevails: the idea, I mean, that the Church, in her calls to repentance, has reference, chiefly at least, to actual sinners, and to known and wilful sins. I do not say that people consciously and deliberately hold and maintain this unscriptural view of repentance. But I do say, that people act and live as though they held it: that multitudes act and live, as if to be orderly and respectable, and attentive to the outward observances of religion, constituted the whole of Christianity; and altogether superseded any inward work, and all need of repentance. To these, sacraments and services, times and seasons, bring no awakening energies, and no alarming call. They frequent the Church; they attend, perhaps, the altar; they keep the Feasts of Christmas or of Easter, the seasons of Advent or of Lent; but if they do, they do all this as though themselves had no vital concern in the matter, as though the stake at issue were not their own immortal souls.

Widely different from this is the evangelic doctrine of repentance, as laid down in the Holy Scripture, and maintained by the Catholic Church. In this view and estimate, the holiest Christian ever will be found the profoundest penitent. For "repentance to salvation not to be repented of," is the very life of God in the soul of man. The tender conscience, the awakened spirit, the "hungerings and thirstings after righteousness" of a soul, placed in time, but living for eternity, give a moral and spiritual sensibility, which to ordinary Christians is unknown. Infirmities which appear as motes to others, appear as beams to themselves: for, in their self-judging eye, not only no wilful sin, but no sin of infirmity is little. Living by the great Apostle's rule, "they judge themselves, that they be not judged of the Lord." They judge themselves severely, that they may be judged mercifully of Him. To such penitents Christ peculiarly reveals himself; and of such repentance he pre-eminently spake, when he uttered the gracious words, "I came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance:" words, indeed, mercifully inclusive of the whole family of fallen Adam; but specially applying to those, whose sense of holiness increases their sorrow for every, the least even unwilful sin. For, where

wilful sin, incompatible with a state of grace, is unknown to the enlightened spirit, sins of infirmity will assume a seriousness proportioned to the tenderness of the wakeful conscience, and the purity of the renewed heart.

This Catholic truth will be best explained and impressed by Scriptural examples. Thus it was after he had undergone all the fiery trials of his faith, and had come victorious through them; after he had been refined like gold purified seven times in the fire; after he had endured unexampled sufferings of body and of mind, and been found faithful before God amidst them all, that holy Job thus pours forth the breathings of a penitent soul, “Wherefore I abhor myself, and *repent* in dust and ashes.”

In the same spirit, and in the same sense, the chief of the Apostles, Saint Paul, — not in the hour of his conversion, not when his eyes were first turned from the darkness of Jewish superstition to the glorious light and liberty of the Gospel of Christ, — but after he had long wrought faithfully and triumphantly in his Master’s vineyard; after (though called into it last of the apostolic husbandmen) “he had laboured more abundantly than they all;” after he had been caught up into the third heavens, and there seen and heard unutterable

things ; after such had been his proficiency “in all that pertaineth to life and godliness,” that he could, in all humility, present himself and his example as a model of “faith, hope, and charity” to all the Churches, in the memorable invitation so oft and earnestly renewed, — “Be ye followers of me, as I am the follower of the Lord Jesus,” — then it was that he thus pours forth the breathings of his pure and holy, but still repentant soul, “This is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; OF WHOM I AM CHIEF.”

It would be an utter perversion of truth and language to interpret this saying in any low or ordinary sense. It would be utter subversion of the work of Christianity to forget, that he who thus proclaims himself “the chief of sinners” was, also, THE CHIEF OF SAINTS. Whence, then, the seeming contradiction, yet real harmony, between terms so opposed? Whence, my brethren, but from the depths of his humility, and from the workings of “a penitent and contrite heart?”

To bring the subject home to ourselves, to our own business and bosoms, this, too, is the very spirit of Church-of-England Christianity. Hence it is that, not only in the porch, but at the altar of

her sanctuary—not only in her general Confession, or in her Litany, but in her Communion Service—she represents *all her children* as “wandering sheep,” as “miserable sinners,” as sufferers under “grievous remembrances,” and “bearers of intolerable burthens.” Language which, misunderstood, might seem to confound all distinctions between the highest saints and the lowest sinners; but which, rightly interpreted, breathes the inmost spirit of Job and of Saint Paul.

It remains only to say a few words upon the observances suited to the present season of humiliation, fasting, and prayer. These observances, as prescribed by the spirit of the Church of England, are altogether foreign from the servile asceticism, and slavish superstition, of the Church of Rome. For while Rome, “like the Jerusalem which is on earth,” in all her ordinances, “is still in bondage, with her children,” the pure and Apostolic Church, of which it is our high privilege to be members, in all her services, “like the Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all, is free.”

With your own awakened consciences, therefore, my brethren, it rests, to spend, as Christians ought to spend, this season of Lent—“to consider, not lightly, nor after the manner of dissemblers with God”—but seriously and soberly, what exercises

may be most required for the health of your own souls: whether fasting may be, to some, the best guardian of temperance; or "temperance in all things," to others, the best kind of fasting.

To one exercise alone, a duty common alike to all, I would, in conclusion, direct your most serious thoughts — the devout and diligent attendance, as at all times, so especially at the present solemn season, in this house of prayer, upon the services of our Church. After every allowance made for the claims of business and the calls of duty, must there not, in a population of fifteen thousand souls, remain "numbers both of men and women" able, if they were willing, to worship God (I will not say daily, but far more frequently) in this glorious temple? Why, then should not the good example of some among this congregation be far more generally followed? Not, assuredly, from any defectiveness in the celebration of those services; for it is confessed of all that the daily services of your cathedral are so solemnized, as to do honour to the Church of England in the eyes of strangers, and worthily to represent her in the presence of princes or of kings.

Let the possessors of such inestimable privileges only show themselves duly sensible of the blessing, and nothing will be found wanting. Nothing will

remain to be desired, if only the spirit of the Royal Psalmist become yours — “One thing have I required of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life ; to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit in His Temple.”

NOTE.

THE spirit of “perfect freedom,” which breathes through the whole Constitution of England in Church and State, is so expressed in one most important place of our Liturgy, as to supply, by anticipation, an effectual guard against one of the most dangerous delusions of the present day. I speak of the Romanizing tendencies manifested upon the subject of “Confession ;” tendencies, originating in a vain trust “in man, whose breath is in his nostrils ;” and issuing in open apostasies from the only pure portion of the Catholic and Apostolic Church. Compare only the tyranny of Rome over the conscience, rather over “the bodies and souls of men,” and the abject prostration of her votaries, under this one particular, with the rule of confession held by the Church of England, as set forth in her Exhortation in the Communion Service ; and judge between Rome and the Anglican Reformation : “And because it is requisite, that no man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a full trust in God’s mercy, and with a quiet conscience ; therefore, *if there be any of you, who, by this means, cannot quiet his own conscience*

herein, but requireth *further comfort or counsel*, let him come to me, *or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's word*, and open his grief; that, *by the ministry of God's Holy Word*, he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, *to the quieting of his conscience, and the avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.*" Is not this Exhortation in the true spirit of "Him, whose service is perfect freedom?" Here is no lording it over the conscience; no erecting of fallible man into an infallible secret tribunal; no dictation of slavish submission, even to his own appointed pastor and teacher. On the contrary, confession, or, more properly speaking, conference or consultation, is to take place, solely at the free desire of the party concerned, for the relief of their own unquiet conscience. It is a relief proffered only to the burthened spirit; a remedy charitably provided for the home-felt, and self-afflictive distresses of the penitent and contrite heart. Accordingly, in this one case, and in it alone, a latitude is granted unknown in all others. In matters of so great delicacy, where, from the nature of the case, considerations may exist rendering appeal to the penitent's own appointed minister difficult, or undesirable, liberty to choose a duly qualified adviser is freely conceded, in the words of the Exhortation, by the appointed minister himself: "Let him come to me, *or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's Word*, and open his grief."* How enlarged, how delicate, how tender, this

* The only passages in the New Testament which notice any confession, save that which is made to God alone, viz. Saint Matthew, iii. 6., Acts, xix. 18., and Saint James, v. 16., are, it is very observable, in perfect accordance with the spirit of this passage. We are to remember, moreover, that the confession of sins spoken of in Saint Matthew and Acts,

provision! How utterly opposed in spirit to the exacting despotism, and revolting coarseness, of Rome! It is the spirit of a loving mother towards a beloved child: or rather the spirit of HIM, whose highest attribute is love:

“What is more tender than a mother’s love
To the sweet infant fondling in her arms?
What arguments need her compassion move
To hear its cries, *and help it in its harms?*”

“Now, if the tenderest mother were possess
Of all the love within her single breast,
Of all the mothers since the world began,
’Tis nothing to the love of God for man!”

How sad as well as strange, that children of a communion like this should be seen to wander “into a far country,” not in quest of milk, but “of the husks which the swine did eat.” How strange as well as sad, that some who ought to have been “fathers, because of the time,” should have proved themselves unworthy of the name of “children.” Such never were true children of the Church of England; for none can be her true children, whose hearts have not always swelled with thankfulness for being hers;

was confession made to *plenarily inspired* guides; and that the confession enjoined by Saint James, was not a transaction between the people and the priesthood, but between a Christian people, mutually, and among themselves: “Confess your faults *one to another*, and pray *one for another*.” The scriptural duty pointed out here, is not an ecclesiastical, but a social duty. This distinction is vitally important on the question; and a death-blow to the Papal tyranny, and moral evils, masked under the cloak of “the Confessional.”

who have not learned to love and look up to her with that filial and undivided affection and affiance, with which the most loving and dutiful of children look up to the best, the most honoured, the most revered of parents.

In faithfully discharging, by this warning voice, as a minister of the Church of England, the duty of a watchman at his post, I would close by the expression of my long-formed and fixed conviction, that England has herself evoked and drawn down those spiritual apostasies, by her own political tamperings with Rome. The question is one of facts. Where, we would ask, before February, 1829, were such perversions to be met with? of what accessions, low or high, had Rome, previously to that fatal year, to boast? Is it not since the political slave (so self-entitled) has been enfranchised, that the spiritual freeman has become a slave? The relation between cause and effect must be abolished, before the connection of cause and consequence can be disproved here. Yes: Rome once admitted into place and power, men soon began to regard her with other eyes than when she was proscribed. Nay, she soon became the pathway of temporal ambition; and spiritual ambition quickly followed in the train. In consequences deplored and deprecated by the great body of the nation, England now reaps only the natural, though bitter fruits. "The woman arrayed in purple and scarlet colour" is once more amidst her. Her streets present, once more, the long-forgotten spectacle of a tonsured priesthood: her towns and cities, the unaccustomed phenomena of Romish temples, towering to the skies, whose belfries, not unfrequently, o'ertop our churches, and whose chimes o'erpower "the sound of the church-going bell." The very soil of England is measured, mapped, parcelled out, by order of a foreign potentate, to meet the

newly-arisen requirements of a Romish hierarchy. And all this is done, not in secret evasion, but in open defiance of the law. By the Church which kindled the fires of Smithfield, England is now invited to hear "the Gospel of peace." And last, not least (for "this is the most unkindest cut of all"), she is called to witness Rome's pseudo-triumphs on the hallowed scene, where Ridley and Latimer, her martyred Saints, kindled that evangelic flame which spread throughout the land; and, faithful even in the fire, sealed their testimony with their blood.

But, whatever the arts of Rome, or the treachery of her own apostate sons, will Protestant England, the central seat of civil freedom, ever bow the neck under the yoke (I use the words of Alexander Knox) of "a black and bloody superstition"? or, in words originally applied to another monstrous tyranny, but far more applicable to this, "Shall she who would not suffer the lion to invade her, tamely stand to be devoured by the wolf?"*
 μή γένοιτο!

* The changed and improved spirit of modern Romanism, it is too well known, formed the foremost, at once, and the most successful plea, by which political advocates justified or excused the inbreak on the Constitution of 1688. Whether, and how far, the arguments advanced to this effect, in February, 1829, are maintainable in February, 1853, may be best judged of by the confessions of the same political advocacy, in February, 1853. "He had heard with great pain and surprise (a noble Lord is reported to have said in his place in Parliament, speaking of a recent and existing example of Romish persecution) that many Roman Catholics did not disapprove. The Earl of Carlisle had called on his fellow Roman Catholic subjects to state, whether they approved of persecution for conscience sake, and whether they thought it right that any government should punish a departure from the Roman Catholic faith. He

If, however, she would be saved from a bondage, in comparison with which all civil liberties are nought, this great Christian nation must, as one man, speak, and continue to speak, in a voice that shall make itself heard. If her statesmen, again, betray their trust, if her Parliaments themselves fail her, Protestant England must teach her statesmen to dread, and her Parliaments to obey, that "voice of the people," which, in this its highest and holiest exercise, is none other than "the voice of God."

was sorry to say that this appeal had not met with the response which might have been expected from Englishmen. He feared it was the case that those of that body who were against persecution were in the minority—a very small minority." The honourable member for —— had publicly stated, that it was the duty of every Catholic state to put down heresy, even by violence, if it should be necessary." Could Philip and Mary desire stronger countenance, or fuller justification, for the butcheries of the Netherlands, or the flames of Smithfield? If such be the admissions of political advocacy, Rome may well exclaim, "Keep me from my friends!"

SERMON IV.

GOOD FRIDAY.

GALATIANS, vi. 14.

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

THE preaching of the cross is that first duty of the Christian ministry upon which the Apostle of the Gentiles most dwells, when he most appears to magnify his office. Thus, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, he declares of his Apostolic teaching: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Again: "But we preach Christ crucified—unto the Jews, a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God." And lastly (not to multiply examples),

in the words of the text: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

These passages, alone, suffice to prove, that the doctrine of the Cross, or the preaching of Christ crucified, must ever lie at the foundation of the teaching of all Christian pastors, who would be followers of Saint Paul, as he was the follower of "the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

If, however, the preaching of the Cross be, at all times and in all places, the office and bounden duty of the Christian priesthood, it becomes more eminently so, at this season dedicated, and upon this solemn day set apart, by the Catholic Church, for the perpetual commemoration of the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, throughout the Christian world.

But, while all who think and feel aright upon the great concerns of Christianity, will readily and cordially admit the duty of duly inculcating this great fundamental of our faith,—a plain and simple, but most important question remains, which comparatively few may be found competently prepared to answer,—namely, what is it to preach the Cross of Christ? What is meant

in Holy Scripture, what intended by Saint Paul, where this preaching is spoken of? The capacity of giving a right answer to this inquiry, is evidently essential to soundness of faith upon the doctrine itself. Yet to answer it aright is no so light and easy matter as some seem to suppose: for thus to answer, Scripture must be compared with Scripture; and the results of this comparison, again, be revised and regulated by the pronounced judgment of the Catholic Church. After this method, it shall be my humble effort, in the following discourse, to obtain for our guidance, the united lights of Holy Scripture and of the Catholic Church, upon the proper subject of this day,—the place which the sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ upon the Cross really holds in the divine system of Christianity.

Upon this day, indeed, it has been usual, (and the usage has been sanctioned by the highest names) to dwell upon the circumstances of our Saviour's Passion; to awaken our best natural sympathies, by the contemplation of his agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and of his last sufferings upon Mount Calvary. But is there not, to say the least, imminent risk of our *humanizing*, by such details, the divine and fathomless mystery of Redemption? And, after all, what human

language can approach, what human imagination reach, the nature or measure of His sufferings, who was both God and man? Here, our very nearest approximations are, and must be from the very nature of the case, but distant and doubtful conjectures; and from hazarding these, an awful reverence should lead us to abstain, unless where the light of Revelation guides us. By this unerring light, indeed, some faint glimpses are afforded into the otherwise impenetrable obscurity. Thus, the falling of his sweat, as it were great drops of blood, indicates an intensity of suffering wholly beyond human experience; and may, not improbably, be ascribed to the essential incompatibility of the sufferings of fallen man,—our sufferings which he bare,—with His all-perfect human nature.

Again: “the appearance of an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him,” unequivocally marks the continual loving presence of his heavenly Father,—even of Him, who, during Christ’s first great temptation in the wilderness, sent, in like manner, his angels to minister unto the Son of his love. And, as *the prince of darkness* was the actor in that first temptation, and since our Lord pronounced, in the awful moment of his last great trial, to those who came to lay hands

on him, "This is your hour, and *the power of darkness*,"—we may analogically infer that the devil was now, also, present tempting him; tempting, now, by the near prospect of the pains of death, as, before, by specious promises of worldly glory and honour,—the opposite trials appearing to have been needful to the perfecting of His obedience, who, "though he were a son, yet (the apostle tells us,) learned obedience by the things which he suffered;" and that our Lord's agony itself may have been the outward and visible sign of the last great conflict between the mighty destroyer, and the Almighty Redeemer of the world; even he, "who, through death, should destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil."

Upon these high matters, so far as Scripture speaks, we may, with reverence, conjecture: but beyond, all is inscrutable, unfathomable, and to be reckoned only among those "secret things which belong unto the Lord our God." But the Scriptural doctrine of Christ's sacrifice upon the Cross is a just and open subject for investigation. And to this, accordingly, we will proceed.

If we may judge by the language and phraseology very generally current in the popular and fashionable theology of the present day, the whole of Christianity would seem to be comprized in

this one initial doctrine of the Cross of Christ. What was then and there done for man, once for all, by that one inestimable act, has been so magnified as to absorb all other parts, if any other parts there be, in the adorable mystery of man's redemption. May there not, however, arise danger, for which those who thus speak can be little prepared, at once from the excess and the defectiveness of an unenlightened zeal;—danger, I mean, to the great, the inestimable, evangelic truth itself, which is here more immediately in question? For, if this doctrine of Christ's sacrifice be *not* the sum of Christianity, to speak of it as such, or to dwell upon it exclusively as though it were, is not to honour, but to dishonour the Cross of Christ. Honour, to be honour, in the ordinary sense of language, must be applicable, must be appropriate, must be characteristic; must, in a word, be the honour due unto the person or thing of which it is predicated. But, if part be put for the whole, the pedestal for the column, the foundation for the building, this, plainly, cannot be the case. Now this is the very misuse of language, against which there is but too much room to except, in the modern zeal for magnifying the Cross of Christ,—a zeal which verbally gives, but virtually withholds from the Saviour of the

world the honour due unto his name, by limiting to the one great act, performed eighteen hundred years ago, the ever-acting, ever-flowing, ever-living influences of the divine work of Redemption.

Neither will it, in the least degree, alter or amend the matter, if we shall be told that they who thus dwell upon any one great doctrine, do not therefore deny the other, and equally essential truths of the Gospel. For every important truth of our holy religion has its own proper part and place in the Christian system; and claims, consequently, a corresponding part and place, not in our assent merely, but in our minds, in our affections, and in our every confession of our faith. To maintain, therefore, that the other main evangelical truths are, or can be, duly honoured, where any one truth has a *practical* monopoly of our thoughts and conversation, is a mere sophism, and a very injurious fallacy. That the sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (as at this time), upon the Cross, for the sins of the whole world, is indeed the one only foundation of the Christian temple,—that foundation, without which it cannot for a moment stand, and independently of which it could never have been erected,—is a truth received by all the churches of God under heaven. But this no more constitutes it the whole

of Christianity, than the foundation of any material building, because indispensable, therefore constitutes the building.

These remarks are obviously grounded upon the assumption, that what Christ has done for us is not limited to any one mere act, however momentous; that what Christ has done for us, infinitely important as it is, is preparatory only to what he does in us: that the Christianity of the New Testament, is not a single or simple thing, but a body, compounded of many members, a divine scheme, consisting of various distinct and separate parts,—all harmonized and adjusted, by the great power of God, to meet, remedially and restoratively, the whole state and condition, in body, soul, and spirit, of fallen man. For the proofs of this evangelic view, we now turn to the law, and to the testimony.

Let us briefly examine, then, not by the uncertain guidance of man's judgment, but by the clear and unerring light of God's Word, the true character of Christianity, as a scheme of Redemption; the several parts of which this divine scheme is composed; and the place which the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross scripturally holds among them.

Our first appeal shall be made to the highest authority,—that of our blessed Lord himself. Speaking in his own person, as the author and finisher

of our faith, he thus, under a natural and easy figure, unfolds the plan of his own divine religion. "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

This imagery, like most scriptural imagery, while far more expressive, is quite as plain and intelligible as the most unfigurative language. The different expressions, we must take for granted, imply corresponding differences of meaning. Now, a door, or entrance, is clearly different from the way, or path, to which it gives admission,—from the fold, or the pasture, which it lays open to the flock: the truth, or knowledge, again, which teaches to find the way, is as plainly distinct from the way: and the life, or power, which qualifies to walk in the way, is altogether to be distinguished from a mere lifeless knowledge of it. In our Lord's familiar imagery, therefore, we may discern at once the compound nature of the Gospel scheme, and the several distinct functions or offices of its Divine Author, suitable to this composition.

The first of these offices is described, we have seen, by Christ himself, under the figure of a door; and by this image, it can be clearly shown from another Scripture, he designed to represent his sacrifice

upon the Cross. In the epistle to the Hebrews, Saint Paul thus speaks of that great sacrifice: "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus; by a new and *living* way, which he hath consecrated for us, *through the veil*, that is to say, *his flesh*." The Apostle's meaning, in this context, cannot be explained away: the veil, in the Jewish Temple, was *the door* of the Holy of Holies; the sacrifice upon the Cross, therefore, here expressly termed *the veil*, is the door or entrance to the Christian sanctuary, — both to that fitly framed and compacted building of his Church upon earth, of which Jesus Christ himself is the head corner-stone; and to that building of God, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

In the passages here examined and compared, we have before us the scriptural rule for honouring the Cross of Christ. But to confound the door of Christ's Cross, with that great high-way to the many mansions of his Father's house to which Christ himself has signified that it is but the entrance; to confound the veil of Christ's flesh, with that new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, — and through which, his Apostle declares, all must pass, who would enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; is nothing less than to remove

the ancient land-marks of divine truth, and to substitute human inventions for the word of God. Confusion of this nature, we must repeat, is unavoidably produced, not only where any one great truth of Christianity is held to the exclusion of its fellows; but wherever the Word of truth is not rightly divided*; wherever an inappropriate place shall be assigned, or an undue prominence given, to any of the parts of which that Word is compounded.

That Christianity is, what we have assumed it to be, a compound plan, has been already shown from the teaching of its divine Author; and when we take Saint Paul for our commentator upon the text of the Gospel, we find only fuller and clearer marks of this composition. Upon the present occasion, our limits will allow but of a single example, — the Holy Apostle's definition, in his first epistle to Timothy, of *the mystery of godliness*: a phrase self-evidently designed to represent to us, at least the grand outline of our faith. What, then, are the specific evangelic truths, which the Apostle of the gentiles here thought fit to select? If the reality were unknown, and the question proposed to Christians of the present day, what would be the probable conjectures, as to the component parts of such a definition? Would they not, before and

* 2 Tim. ii. 15.

above all other themes, be these,—the Cross and atoning merits of the Saviour of the world,—his imputed righteousness,—and our forensic justification? What, however, *are* the truths put forward by Saint Paul? Let us hear the terms of his inspired definition; and learn, while we hear, to lean not to our own understanding.

“Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” In this short, but full and genuine Apostle’s creed, we meet not, it is deserving of all observation, specific mention of any one of the points of doctrine, now, by many, exclusively insisted on, as articles denoting a standing, or a falling Church. Is it that the true doctrines of the Cross of Christ, of justification by faith, and of imparted righteousness, were less precious in the eye of the great Apostle of the gentiles, than in the estimate of his professed followers in after-times? Assuredly, my brethren, not so. The explanation is simply and plainly this,—that these great truths are here all compressed and comprehended within those grand kindred verities, the Incarnation; the descent of the Holy Ghost; the promulgation of the everlasting Gospel, in the sight of the admiring angels of God,

throughout the world ; and the resurrection, finally, and ascension into heaven, of the triumphant and glorified Redeemer.

In other words, the mysterious *means*, divinely provided for the accomplishment of this wonderful consummation, all-good, all-gracious, and unutterably praiseworthy as they were, are here absorbed in the infinitely blessed and glorious END : — “ the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.”

Thus far we have endeavoured to collect the sense of Scripture, upon the true character, and just definition of Christianity. The passages selected form, indeed, but a point in the scriptural evidences : they appear, however, ample to prove, that our holy religion is not a single or simple, but a compound faith ; a divinely-ordered plan, no part of which, on the one hand, can be exclusively insisted on, or, on the other hand, practically pretermitted, without injury to the whole. Whether the sense of Scripture has been now, rightly collected, remains to be determined by another touchstone, the pronounced judgment of our own venerable Church.

Let us proceed, then, to deduce from her own catholic services, — first, the views of the Church of England upon the present subject at large ; and, secondly, the place which, conformably with her

interpretation of Scripture, she has assigned, in the divine system of Christianity, to the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross.

1. *Her* sentiments, both as to the complex nature of the great work of Redemption, and as to the vital importance of every part of that work to *individual* salvation, are written in her liturgy in characters so plain, that, to use the expressive words of the prophet, "he may run that readeth." While other denominations of Christians, while some even among her own sons, dwell predominantly or exclusively upon one and upon another feature, as prejudice and preconception may lead, —the Church of England, in her litany, beginning from the Incarnation and ending with the day of Pentecost, thus magnifies and honours alike all the parts and features of the mystery of godliness, in the highest of all tributes, her solemn acts of prayer. Let us hear her addresses to the divine Redeemer, and gather wisdom while we hear. "By the mystery of thy holy Incarnation; by thy holy Nativity and Circumcision; by thy Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation; by thine Agony and bloody Sweat; by thy Cross and Passion; by thy precious Death and Burial; by thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost; —good Lord, deliver us."

In these comprehensive petitions, no one of the manifold mercies of God our Saviour, in the marvellous mystery of our redemption, is magnified to the undue depreciation, or depreciated to the undue exaltation, of its fellows. On the contrary, each has its proper part and place, and all become, in due order and succession, the subjects of prayer. Instead of narrowing her contemplations to any single point, her living faith embraces and holds fast the whole work of Redemption. She follows Christ, by faith, from the cradle to the cross; from his death and burial, to his glorious resurrection and ascension, — with all their eternal consequences in that heaven of heavens, “where he ever liveth to make intercession for us.” And thus, instead of looking back, with but too many, only upon a crucified Messiah, with the holy Apostle, she delights to look forward, and upward, to a living and risen Saviour: — the ever-present source of spiritual strength, and health, and holiness, and happiness; the ever-springing fountain of all Christian grace and goodness.

The recorded judgment of the Church of England, therefore, and, in her, that of the holy Catholic Church, sets the seal of its authority upon the conclusions, which, in the present discourse, had been previously deduced from Scripture, respecting the

impossibility of including, under any single act of our divine Redeemer, his great work of Redemption; and the equal claim of every part and feature of that almighty work upon our faith and hope, upon our praise and adoration.

2. From this full and clear exposition, in the services of the Church of England, of the scriptural character of Christianity, we turn, lastly, to ascertain the specific place which, according to her belief, the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross, which we this day celebrate, holds in that divine revelation.

Now, in her highest and most solemn service, the service specially dedicated to the celebration of that most holy sacrifice,—her communion office,—our Church has declared *her* sense of Scripture, and assigned its place to Christ's infinitely meritorious sacrifice, with a definitiveness of language which leaves not room for any save wilful misconception. I speak of the exordium to the solemn prayer of consecration. To repeat this exordium is at once to set at rest the question as to the belief which every true son of the Church of England is invited to hold and profess upon the subject.

“ Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of thy tender mercy didst give thine only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the Cross for our

redemption; who made there, by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

These words manifestly assign to the Cross of Christ the same place and office, in the work of our redemption, which we have already shown to be allotted it in Holy Scripture. They represent it as opening, indeed, the way of salvation unto all men, but as conferring actual salvation upon those only, who practically fulfil the conditions of the Christian covenant, by bringing forth the blessed fruits of faith and obedience. Here, as in our Lord's teaching, the Cross is the door, the gate, the only entrance into the way of life: even that entrance prepared by Him (the purchase of his precious blood-shedding) "who hath the key of David; who openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."

To this point, the words of the consecration prayer directly conduct us; but, if pressed beyond this meaning, if understood to extend, from salvability to actual salvation, — the words, "Who made there, by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world," — inevitably land those who would thus

misinterpret them, in the error of the universalists.

The sum of the whole matter is shortly this : to open the way of salvation, and to make all mankind capable of walking therein ; so to do away the sin of Adam, and its fatal consequences, as to redeem the whole world from a state of antecedent condemnation, as to render faith and repentance effectual for the remission of individual transgressions, and to bring down power from above, the power of the Holy Spirit of God, to renew the hearts, and sanctify the lives and conversation, of all who will truly come unto God by Him ; this, according to Scripture, and to the Catholic Church the best interpreter of Scripture, is the proper office of the sacrifice and Cross of Christ.

Individual and actual salvation, on the other hand, will invariably depend upon the use made, by mankind individually, of these blessed means ; upon the faith which we profess bearing fruit unto holiness,—even that holiness whose end is everlasting life.

Accordingly, throughout the New Testament, we find the doctrine of the Cross itself always viewed in strict connection with the practical influences of Christianity. And in the words of

the text, Saint Paul glories in the Cross of Christ, not as an object of faith, but as an instrument of holiness, because, by it, "the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world."

Crucifixion to the world then, according to Saint Paul, is the central character and condition of the Christian life. And what the Apostle intends by crucifixion to the world, we learn from that Divine Exemplar, whose chosen follower and imitator he was: "If any man will come after me (said our Saviour Christ) let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." This command plainly has respect, not to the cross of persecution borne by the first Christians, but to the cross of self-denial, to be daily borne by all, who desire to walk worthy of their holy calling, and rightly to "name the name of Christ." Deadness to the world, relinquishment of the world, separation from the world scripturally so entitled, are necessarily implied in this divine injunction. What, with the ancient philosopher, was but a noble dream, here stands proclaimed as a blessed reality: "thus it behoves us to live every day, as though each day were to be our last." It is a life thus lived, which alone can sanctify to us this holy season, and this solemn fast-day.

"It is (observes an illustrious layman of our

Church*, who, being dead, yet speaketh) as plain a duty, in the modern Christian, to resist the stream of the world, as ever it was in the primitive one. Like the prophets of old, he has to bear his testimony on the side of God and holiness, amidst a multitude of gainsayers. He has not to expose, like the Apostles, his back to stripes, and his life to martyrdom. But, since he is delivered from these greater trials, let him the more cheerfully endure the smaller. Let him not fear to assert his Christian singularity; to resist the corrupt customs of this generation; and to avoid those amusements of the world, which are accommodated to its unchristian taste, and are unbecoming the purity and strictness of the Gospel. Let him refuse, in short, in a thousand instances, to do as others do; and let him practise many things which others, deeming them unnecessary strictnesses, do not care to practise. Finally let him, who has as yet experienced no opposition, examine whether his faith, and his practice, be not accommodated to the taste of the world, in a manner quite unauthorized by Scripture. And, if the dread of opposition have been the hinderance to his profession of a purer Christi-

* The late Henry Thornton, Esq., M. P.

anity, let him remember WHO hath said, "Except a man take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple;" and, "except a man forsake even his father and mother, and wife and children (when they are his hinderance in the Gospel), yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple;" and again, "whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh, in his own glory, and in the glory of the Father, with his holy Angels."

SERMON V.

TUESDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK.

SAINT JOHN, xv. 26.

“ But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me.”

SUPPOSE this passage placed before us for the first time, placed before us alone, and apart from all consideration of the sacred record and sacred volume in which it stands, would it not be clear that there are three parties here spoken of,—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit of Truth or Comforter, proceeding from the Father, and sent by the Son, here speaking. This would certainly be our judgment of any ordinary sentence, containing an equally clear statement, in equally plain words. From the closeness of connection indicated between the parties, it would further be apparent, that all three were joint witnesses to a certain truth, although the last only is specified as bearing witness; but whether the amount of witness thus intimated

was arbitrary, or had reference to some standard, this, not being expressed, can be learned only from sources of information beyond the text.

“To the law and to the testimony,” therefore, we proceed for light in this matter; since the testimony spoken of in the text, was an appeal by ONE “made under the law” to Jews, like himself, “born under the law,” and would naturally and necessarily, therefore, have reference to the law of witness as laid down in the law of Moses.

The Mosaic law of witness, so familiar to all, claims special notice and attention in the present connection. This divine law, you are aware, required, in all important cases, the presence of “two or three witnesses.” The reason is assigned by its divine Author—“that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”

The importance of the rule, as a fundamental law of evidence, is marked, not only by its institution, recorded in the book of Numbers, but by its two-fold repetition, in that of Deuteronomy. The invariableness of its observance under the Jews’ religion, is traceable from the earliest to the latest periods of the Jewish polity, from the book of Ruth to the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and thence, again, to the coming and time of our Blessed Lord.

That this Jewish law of witness was equally the divine law under the Gospel dispensation, is clearly proved by its reiterated enforcement throughout the New Testament.

But if the Mosaic rule, as the one first principle of the whole law of evidence, was thus equally in force under both covenants, in all questions of life and property, it must be expected, by analogy, to be in force still more cogently and solemnly, in questions affecting the evidences of the life everlasting, and the highest interests of immortal man. Foremost among these questions self-evidently stands, the doctrine of the Godhead, that only source of "life, and breath, and all things;" that whence alone springeth the whole divine scheme and process of creating, redeeming, and sanctifying love. If, then, Christianity itself be treated in the New Testament as a question of evidences, the scriptural law of witness must be expected pre-eminently to obtain, in what respects the being, and nature, and attributes of God.

Now Christianity itself, in the New Testament, is treated, throughout, as a question of evidences. The Apostles themselves are described, by their first president, St. Peter, as "ordained to be *witnesses* of Christ's resurrection," and again as "*witnesses* of all things which he did, both in the land

of the Jews, and in Jerusalem,—*witnesses* chosen before of God, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.”

Saint Paul, in like manner, at a later period, rests the doctrine of the resurrection, and, in it, the truth, and saving virtue of Christianity, wholly upon the evidences of that all-glorious event; and under the sense of its unspeakable importance, this master-reasoner presents to the Corinthian Christians an array of evidences, unparalleled in the history of evidence, sacred or profane.

Now, from the Resurrection and its evidences, we have but to return to the doctrine of the Godhead and its witnesses, and from the practice of the Apostles, to the example of their Lord, to see the law of witness laid down by Moses, here adopted as his rule by our Saviour Christ.

In the same gospel of Saint John whence the text is derived, we find our Lord, in presence of the assembled scribes and Pharisees, and in answer to their gainsaying, thus vindicating the truth and authority of his mission, by a solemn appeal to their own law of evidence: “It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself; and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.”

But while the testimony of two men was to be

legally received as true, the law of Moses (doubtless for a wise and adequate purpose) provided a still further security for the fuller establishment of the truth, by the discretionary addition of a third witness: "At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established." That this separate provision had its special use and purpose, none can question where the enactment is divine. The use and purpose are, in truth, self-evident. The highest number of witnesses belonged to the more important causes; and this being so, we are authorized to anticipate, that the highest number would obtain, in the most important cause which could arise between God and man, namely, the nature of the Godhead, both within itself, and in its relations with the recovery and restoration of a fallen world.

Now how stands the witness of the Godhead to "the truth as it is in Jesus Christ," in Saint John's Gospel? In the fifth and eighth chapters we have, indeed, the fullest testimony of two heavenly witnesses, the Father and the Son: the former previously borne in "the voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" the latter, in those mighty miracles and wonders, which none but God could work. Two of the heavenly witnesses we here have; but where is

the third ? The third, my brethren, "was not yet." And why ? because the Comforter was not yet come ; because God the Holy Ghost had not yet descended amongst men. But his coming was foreseen ; his coming was foretold ; his coming was the theme of prophetic anticipation from the lips of Him, "who spake as never man spake," of Him who was to send Him, when, in the near prospect of approaching death, he would breathe heavenly consolation into the hearts of his sorrowing disciples ; and this consolation, and in it the completion of the heavenly witness, is contained in the words of the text : "But, when the Comforter is come, whom I *will* send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, HE SHALL TESTIFY OF ME."

In the gospel of Saint John, therefore, we have, what the reason of the case would anticipate, the highest testimony provided by the law of Moses, borne in the highest cause which could arise between God and man ; only, in strictest agreement with the circumstances of time and place, two of the three witnesses are here spoken of as present, the third as future ; "for (says the beloved disciple) the Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

The importance of this threefold evidence, how-

ever, terminates not in itself; it indissolubly connects itself with corresponding evidence beyond it. The same circumstances of time which prevented the appearance together of the three heavenly witnesses in the Gospel of Saint John, required their appearance together in his first general Epistle. At the time of which the Gospel treats, the Holy Ghost was not yet come; at the time the Epistle was written, he had long tabernacled among men. And hence arises a new argument of internal evidence for the genuineness of that glorious text, whose internal evidences already so far outweigh all that, whether internally or externally, has been brought against it, the text of the three heavenly witnesses. For the Gospel and the first general Epistle of Saint John, in the treatment of their common theme—the divinity of the Word of God—are so at unity in doctrine, in spirit, and in the whole turn of expression, as altogether to preclude the idea of any vital break in that unity. Take away, however, from the context of the Epistle, the text of the three heavenly witnesses, and the unity is broken, *the Epistle* is left without the law of witness, so solemnly laid down, by Christ himself, in the Gospel; and *the Gospel* is left without the completion of its own prophetic triad of witnesses, consequent upon the coming and ministry of God the Holy Ghost.

Retain, on the other hand, as the Holy Catholic Church ever has retained, the text of the three heavenly witnesses, and all is at unity, all complete, all perfect. The declarations of Christ in the Gospel — “I am one that bear witness of myself; and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me;” “the works which the Father hath given me to finish bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me; and the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me;” and lastly, in the text, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, **HE SHALL TESTIFY OF ME;**” these declarations of our Lord find their counterpart, only, and completion, in the answering words of his beloved apostle and evangelist Saint John, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.”

The doctrine of the Godhead, and the more full enunciation of that doctrine delivered in the text of the three heavenly witnesses, is a subject peculiarly in place at this season of Pentecost, when the

Church of Christ throughout the world celebrates the advent of the Third Witness, and, in his advent, the fulfilment of our Lord's promise, —“ But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me.” This testimony is that of which Saint Peter speaks, when the time of the promise was fulfilled : “ And we are HIS witnesses of these things ; AND SO IS ALSO THE HOLY GHOST, *whom God hath given to them that obey Him.*”

And here, my brethren, let me invite your most serious attention to the true character of the subject here before us, and to the real bearings of the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, not upon the understandings only, but upon the hearts and lives of men. For has not this blessed doctrine too commonly been regarded, more as matter of faith, than as means of holiness ? Has not the notion, in point of fact, been widely prevalent, that the scriptural doctrine is to be received, indeed, with implicit reverence, but that the consideration of so profound a mystery (unfathomable by the wisest) belongs more to scholars and divines than to ordinary Christians ?

Not such, my brethren, was the judgment of the Holy Catholic Church of old in her views and ex-

positions of this doctrine of the Godhead. Not such the judgment of the glorious champion of this doctrine, Saint Athanasius. In the works of this great ancient, the doctrine of the Trinity ever is advanced, not as a matter of curious speculation, but as the central principle of the Christian life: the saving love of God the Father, the redeeming love of God the Son, and the sanctifying love of God the Holy Ghost, are the meditation, the comfort, the joy of his holy soul. The ever-present influence of each Divine Person of the Godhead, respectively, in their revealed office and ministration, is his stay under persecution, his support through life, and, in the prospect of death, his crown of rejoicing. And is not this the Gospel view? Is not this the light in which the divine offices and ministrations of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, are always represented to us in the New Testament? Is any cold, or abstract, or merely speculative notion of the Deity, conveyed in that divine volume? Assuredly there is not. None such were found there by the worthies of old time; and none such ever will be found there by the faithful and diligent inquirer after "the truth as it is in Christ Jesus." Let us then, brethren, as at all times, so, especially, at this blessed season of Pentecost, seek grace of "God our Saviour," to be, to live, to die

thus minded. Let us hold and cherish the scriptural, the catholic, the apostolic doctrine of the Godhead, as the very life-blood of our souls. Let us hold fast and cherish it, even as it was held fast and cherished by Saint Paul, when he presented it in all the fulness of its grace and glory unto "Titus, his own son after the common faith," in words which should live engraven in every true Christian heart: "But after that the kindness and love of GOD OUR SAVIOUR towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR, that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life." Amen.

SERMON VI.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

REV. viii. 3.

“ And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it, with the prayers of ALL SAINTS upon the golden altar which was before the throne.”

“ THE communion of Saints” is delivered as an article of faith, in our shortest and simplest formulary of belief, — the confession commonly styled “the Apostles’ Creed.” And it well becomes us to learn and imbibe the sentiments of our Church upon a doctrine, which, if less ancient than other parts of this ancient creed, has nevertheless commanded, from the first ages down, the full assent and acceptance of “the holy Catholic Church;” and which the Church has received and transmitted, by express warrant of Scripture. The communion or fellowship of the Saints of God, is a subject, on which the Scriptures of both Testaments delight to dwell; and the terms in which the sacred

writers insist on it, manifestly show, that the scriptural doctrine is not limited to this lower sphere, but embraces the household of God in both worlds.

In "the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death," we find a solemn recognition of this consort and communion: — "The Lord," saith the dying lawgiver, "came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, *and he came with ten thousands of his saints.* Yea, he loved the people; *all his saints are in thy hand*; and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy word." In this sublime prediction concerning the King Messiah, concerning the saints above, who shall attend on him, and the saints below, who shall receive him, there is a clear discovery of the doctrine of their communion — of a glad fellowship of the families of earth and heaven.

In the prophecy of Zechariah, concerning the coming of Christ, and the graces of his kingdom, we have the same great truth foreshown: "And the Lord my God shall come; *and all the saints with thee.* And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name One."

Under the law of the New Testament, the pro-

spect of this communion is blessedly cleared, and the promise respecting it abundantly confirmed. Saint Paul, when he treats on the theme before us, throws the full light of Gospel truth upon the fainter intimations of the former covenant: he proclaims, that Christ shall judge the world with and by his glorified saints: he pronounces the disciples of Christ on earth, members of the household of God, and fellow-citizens with the saints in heaven: he describes the whole family of faith, in heaven and earth, as one; and for the members of this family here below, he prays, that they may be gifted with love, with knowledge, with enjoyment, answering to the enjoyment, the knowledge, and the love, partaken of in full measure by their brethren in heaven; even that "they may be able to comprehend with *all saints*, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God:" he invites us "to give thanks unto the Father, for that he hath made us meet to be" (even in this present life) "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Now, with prophetic anticipation, he proclaims "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints:" again, he testifies, that Christ's faithful servants are already

come "unto Mount Zion, and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and to God, the Judge of all; and TO THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT."

The Apostle Jude carries back to the earliest time the doctrine of a communion of saints, and awfully connects the joint testimony of law and gospel, with a primitive and patriarchal revelation. "And Enoch also," saith he, "the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold the Lord cometh, *with ten thousand of his saints*, to execute judgment upon all." But, for the beloved disciple and Evangelist it was reserved to present this doctrine under a more glorious aspect still; — to place it before us, arrayed, not in the terrors of judgment, but in the brightness of God's presence, and the everlasting blessedness of the invisible world. "And another angel came, and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it, *with the prayers of all saints*, upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

The article of the communion of saints, taken in its perfect sense, must be understood to include various classes and degrees of fellowship ; as of good men with God, with Christ, with the Spirit, with holy angels, with kindred hearts in this world, and with the perfected spirits of the just in the world to come.

In this last and highly edifying sense are we especially called to consider the doctrine, when we would celebrate the memory of those worthies, “ of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,” who have departed this life in the faith and fear of God.

In this connection it may be right to inquire, in the first place, what it is to be a saint ; and, secondly, what particular ground there is, from the nature of the case, to presume on a continuance of fellowship between the saints on earth, and the saints in heaven. Both inquiries it is my intention to resolve, in the words of the truly learned and pious expositor of the Apostles’ Creed.

With reference to the former question, “ those,” observes the good Bishop Pearson, “ are truly and properly saints, which are ‘*sanctified in Christ Jesus* :’ first, in respect of their holy faith, by which they are regenerated and purified ; and, secondly, in respect of their conversation : *For as*

he which hath called them is holy, so are they holy in all manner of conversation. Such persons, then, as are called by an holy calling, and not disobedient unto it; such as are endued with a holy faith, and purified thereby; such as are sanctified by the Holy Spirit of God, and by virtue thereof do lead a holy life, *perfecting holiness in the fear of God*; such persons, I say, are really and truly saints; and being of the church of Christ (as all such now must of necessity be), are the proper subjects of this article, THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS."

From this plain and practical definition of the saints on earth, we pass to the question of their community with the saints in heaven: and thus it is that the same edifying writer treats of this subject. "The saints of God living in the church of Christ, are in communion with all the saints departed out of this life, and admitted to the presence of God. *Jerusalem* sometimes is taken for the church on earth, sometimes for that part of the church which is in heaven; to show, that as both are represented by one, *so both are but one city of God*. Indeed, the communion of the saints in the church of Christ with those which are departed, is demonstrated by their communion with the saints alive. For, if I have communion with

a saint of God, as such, while he liveth here, I must still have communion with him, when he is departed hence; because the foundation of that communion *cannot* be removed by death. The mystical union between Christ and his church, the spiritual conjunction of the members to the head, is the true foundation of that communion which one member hath with another; all the members living and increasing by the same influence which they receive from Him. But death, which is nothing else but the separation of the soul from the body, maketh no separation in the mystical union, no breach of the spiritual conjunction; and, consequently, there must continue the same communion, because there remaineth the same foundation: the true and unfeigned holiness of man, wrought by the powerful influence of the Spirit of God, not only remaineth, but also is improved after death; the correspondence in the internal holiness was the true communion in their persons in their life; they cannot, therefore, be said to be divided by death, which had no power over that sanctity by which they were first conjoined."

Such are the sentiments of our venerable Church, as expounded by one profoundly versed in her doctrines, — sentiments derived, through the holy Catholic Church, from the apostolic age, and

grounded on plain and express warrant of Scripture.

Having thus far explained and fixed the general doctrine, I shall, in the next place, so far as our present imperfect knowledge of things invisible may reach, proceed to examine and set before you such particulars of this communion as may best contribute to personal edification, to the improvement of our hearts, and the amendment of our lives and conversation.

Be it observed, then, that the term communion, or fellowship, supposes a certain mutual relation. In contemplating the communion or fellowship of the saints, we have to consider, therefore, first, how far the glorified spirits of the just can be shown to hold communion with their brethren who are still clothed in the veil of mortality; and, secondly, how far the servants of God in this life are privileged to communicate with the saints of Christ in his heavenly kingdom.

The words of the text appear to notify, that Christ's servants of his earthly and heavenly kingdoms hold fellowship still together, through the bond of their common prayers before the throne of God. "And another angel came, and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer

it, with *the prayers of ALL saints*, upon the golden altar which was before the throne." That the prayers of the church militant ascended in this sacrifice, it is plainly impossible to question; and where *all saints* are explicitly numbered in the Apocalyptic reckoning, it were surely a presumptuous interpretation, which would undertake to exclude the prayers of the church triumphant!

But the conclusion suggested by the text will appear demonstratively just, if it can be further shown that the saints in heaven, still, actually pray. Now, from the same Apocalypse whence the text is derived, this fact can be made irresistibly apparent. "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth! And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." But if the prayers of the blessed martyrs, within their heavenly habitations, were thus offered and accepted for judgment on

Christ's foes, think you that they could be less fervently offered, or less freely accepted, in behalf of their fellow-servants and fellow-sufferers, who, as the answer of God testifieth unto them, were successively to follow in the path which they had trodden, and, like them, through much tribulation, to enter into the kingdom of God? Think you that the prayers of the saints in bliss could be permitted to go up for judgment, — and yet the power, the blessed privilege be denied them, of imploring “grace, mercy, and peace” on Christ's soldiers and servants, whom they behold (for Scripture tells us they behold them) manfully maintaining the good fight in which *they* had conquered, and, after their good example, pressing onward to lay hold on the same eternal life?

Not so, my brethren: reason, experience, Christianity, with one voice, certify, that IT IS NOT SO! The prayers of the blessed *are* heard, the prayers of the blessed *are* accepted, the prayers of the blessed ascend as a sweet-smelling sacrifice before the throne of God, for all who keep on earth the testimony of Jesus, and lay up for themselves treasure in heaven. Such, doubtless, are the prayers of which the vision elsewhere speaks: — “And he (the Lamb) came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne.

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and the four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, WHICH ARE THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS."

The intercession here recognised by Scripture and the holy Catholic Church, is widely different from the doctrine of intercession, erroneously and superstitiously inculcated by the Church of Rome. In the full sense of the term, holy Scripture and the Catholic Church know of but the one mediator and intercessor between God and man, — Jesus Christ, himself both God and man. But, in a duly restricted sense, both Scripture and the Church maintain the comforting belief, of "prayers and intercessions offered up" by the saints in glory, in behalf of their still suffering brethren here below : prayers and intercessions, similar in kind to those daily offered up by the faithful for one another; only rendered more acceptable unto God, by the purer spirit of the offerers, and more efficacious unto man, by the increased wisdom and knowledge of the heavenly state, to which the blessed are exalted.

Hear, on this subject, the voice of the Church of England, by the mouths of two of the most illustrious of her sons.

On the eve of his own martyrdom, thus it is that the true father of the English Reformation, the wise and venerable Bishop Ridley, addresses himself to a brother confessor, like him about to suffer in the same good cause:—“If it be not the place that sanctifieth the man, but the holy man doth, by Christ, sanctify the place,—brother Bradford, then happy and holy shall be that place, wherein thou shalt suffer; and that shall be with thy ashes in Christ’s cause sprinkled over withal. So long as I shall understand thou art on thy journey, I shall call upon our Heavenly Father to see thee safely home; *and then*, good brother, *speak you, and pray for the remnant which are to suffer for Christ’s sake*, ACCORDING TO THAT THOU THEN SHALT KNOW MORE CLEARLY.”

In kindred spirit, at a later day, the exemplary Bishop Ken thus breathes forth the meditations of his pure and pious soul:—“I believe, oh! most holy Jesus, that thy saints here below have communion with thy saints above; *that they pray for us in heaven*, while we celebrate their memories, congratulate their bliss, give thee thanks for their labours of love, and imitate their examples.”

We conclude, therefore, (and how inexpressibly delightful and consolatory the conclusion!) that the saints of God in heaven hold fellowship and

communion with the servants of God on earth, by prayers and supplications in behalf of Christ's church militant, offered upon the altar which is before the eternal throne.

But other warrant of holy Scripture there is to authorise the opinion, that the communion of the blessed above with the faithful here, is not restricted solely to the general interposition of their prayers. The vision of Moses and Elias on the mount of the Transfiguration, would appear rather to indicate a more actual and immediate agency and concern on the part of the blessed, in all transactions affecting the everlasting interests of mankind: and this miraculous indication derives further strength from those remarkable appearances at the time of our Lord's crucifixion, related in the Gospel history; when "many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves, after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, *and appeared unto many.*"

Saint Paul, however, has placed this matter beyond a question of opinion: in the Epistle to the Hebrews, this chief of the Apostles represents the saints and worthies of old (whom he numbers from Adam even unto Christ), as witnessing the whole lives and conversation of the faithful in this world, and as watching over them for good. By

this consideration, as one of supreme and irresistible force, he animates the faith, and kindles the holy emulation, of his own followers and disciples:—“Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

It is unquestionable, then, as the authority of a clear oracle of God, that the perfected spirits of the just are set in array above us; survey the Christian's conflict; keep watch over their still suffering brethren; mark their hours of trial,—approve their faithful struggles,—sympathise in their sorrows, applaud their triumphs, and joyfully anticipate their reward. We conclude, therefore, further, (and how cheering and encouraging is the conclusion!) that the blessed saints in heaven communicate with the servants of God on earth, as guides and guardians throughout their earthly pilgrimage, and as friends to bid them welcome to their heavenly habitations.

From this scriptural view of the communion of

saints, as it respects the fellowship of the saints on high with the servants of God on earth, we naturally pass to the second head proposed for our consideration, concerning the fellowship to be maintained by Christ's true disciples here, with "the spirits of just men made perfect."

In the first place, then, we have express warrant of God's word for the belief, that the servants of God below, communicate with his saints above, by the fellowship of their common prayers. Our Lord himself has instructed us to pray for the coming of his kingdom; and, in this petition, we necessarily implore a perfect consummation of happiness for the saints in bliss. The commandment of Christ in this matter is plain to all men, but to us, the precept is rendered plainer than to others, by the admirable comment on it in the burial service: there, we of the Church of England are taught to pray, "that it may please Almighty God of his gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of his elect, and to hasten his kingdom; that we, WITH ALL THOSE THAT ARE DEPARTED in the true faith of his holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in his eternal and everlasting glory."

We conclude, therefore, (for the authority of Christ's church and of his word equally sanction

the inference,) that the saints on earth hold fellowship with the saints in heaven, by contemplation of their glory, by desire for their improved felicity, by prayer for the perfecting of their happiness, even as their holiness is perfected, in Christ's heavenly and everlasting kingdom.

Again, the servants of God below communicate with his saints above, by the fellowship of imitation:—they are to copy the good example which these have left after them; to hold fast the remembrance of their lives, and to model faithfully thereby, their own lives and conversation.] The voice of God himself, in Scripture, invites us continually to this holy imitation; and does not a responding voice within, even that of the nature which He hath given us, persuasively testify, that it is the voice of God? Allow me only to remind you, that this our individual study and emulation of the example of the saints in glory, is the one grand essential on which the Church insists, in her inimitable collect for “All Saints’ Day.” Mark, my brethren, and learn, so that you may inwardly digest her words; then shall you find in them comfort and rest unto your souls:—“O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord; grant us grace so to follow thy

blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

We conclude, therefore, (and this last conclusion is of unspeakable and infinite moment to our souls,) that the servants of Christ on earth, hold fellowship and communion with his saints in heaven, by desire and study to emulate their good example,—to copy after their lives,—to transcribe their recorded or their witnessed virtues, not on tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart,—by study and desire to live as they lived, in order, and to the end, that they may die as they died; to live, like them, in "the beauty of holiness," that they may die, like them, in happiness and peace; to live, like them, by grace, that, like them, they also may rise to glory: and, finally, that Christ's earthly servants hold fellowship with his glorified saints, in the glad desire and longing of heart, to become, in God's good time, partakers of their joys; in holy aspirations after that perfect consummation and bliss, in Christ's eternal and everlasting kingdom, which "neither the eye hath seen, nor the ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive."

Such, brethren, is the Catholic doctrine of the communion of saints, as set forth in the Holy Scriptures, maintained by the universal church, handed down in the Apostles' Creed, and preserved more especially *to us*, and for our edification, in the rituals and celebrations of our venerable church services.

One consideration remains to be brought before you, a consideration pregnant with deep and awful interest. Recollect only the terms of that communion of which we speak,—that it is *a communion of saints*. In this communion, not the wicked and profane alone, but the negligent disciple, the cold or lukewarm worshipper, the careless hearer,—in a word, the unprofitable and unfruitful servant, has, and can have, no share. For us there is no fellowship with the glorified spirits of the just, unless the light of their example shine in upon our hearts, and bring forth fruit, the blessed fruits of the Gospel, in our lives.

Nor is this all; for if we fail to profit as we ought, by the example of God's departed servants, whether as recorded for our learning, or as witnessed with our eyes, the bequeathers themselves of that slighted example shall, of a surety, rise up against us to judgment in the last day. In that

hour, the saints of God shall appear unto his unfaithful and unfruitful worshippers, in a new and unutterably awful form ; since God, the Eternal God himself, in His holy word, warns us, that it is by His saints Christ shall judge the world. Hear the testimony of God in this matter, by the mouths of His highly favoured patriarch Enoch, and of His elect Apostle, Saint Jude. “ Behold the Lord cometh, with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all ; and to convince *all* that are ungodly among them, of *all* their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of *all* their hard speeches,” (yea of every idle word,) “ which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” Hear the voice of this testimony, and take warning while you hear. If the example of the good be not improved for your peace, it will infallibly become the seal of your everlasting ruin.

How, then, may we, this day, improve God’s warning voice unto salvation ? How derive those benefits, and hopes, and consolations, from the blessed doctrine of the communion and fellowship with the saints in glory, — which we are taught by holy Scripture to expect from this doctrine, and which the great God himself, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, designed it to convey ?

Let us turn to God's word, and to the testimony of Christ's church, for our answer. They will tell us, that the communion with the blessed must have its beginning and its end in a fellowship of spirit — in a community of thoughts, of will, of desires, of affections. We must conform ourselves to the example of their earthly lives, in order to become partakers in their heavenly reward. Was their holiness of living exemplary while on earth? We also must live holy in all manner of conversation. Were their faith, their meekness, their charity conspicuous? We must be faithful, humble, charitable too. Have their works, wrought in faith, and which still leave a fragrance after them, accompanied and borne witness to them in their abodes of bliss? We must provide "*bags which fail not, and garments which wax not old,*" that when our departure is at hand, we may be found, like them, provided and clothed for immortality.

Thus only can we duly celebrate the communion of saints. Thus alone may we obtain a place in their sympathy, and an interest in their prayers; — sympathy full of grace and blessing to our souls; prayers which ascend for ever, and shall for ever be accepted before the throne of God. "And another angel came, and stood at the altar, having

a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it, with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came *with the prayers of the saints*, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

SERMON VII.

THE CIRCUMCISION.

ROM. iv. 11, 12, 13.

“ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”

IN these words the Apostle of the Gentiles, in refutation of the false teaching of the Jews and Judaizing Christians of his own day, declares the true nature and design of that legal rite, to which, in common with all other ordinances of the Mosaic law, the Saviour of the world, to the end that he might fulfil all righteousness, as on this day submitted.

Among the Jews of Saint Paul's time, it appears

to have been the universally received belief, that circumcision was the only passport to salvation. Accordingly, in the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Acts, we read, — “ And certain men, which came down from Judæa, taught the brethren, and said, ‘ Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.’ ” Against this uncharitable and unfounded dogma, — a doctrine which struck at the root of Christianity itself, — the Apostle, in the text, proceeds to show—1. That, in the case of Abraham himself, who first received the law of circumcision, this rite, instead of being a means of salvation, was nothing more than the seal of God’s testimony to his past life — the stamp of the divine acceptance of his previous faith and former works of righteousness. And, 2. That the seal thus set belonged, prospectively, to all faithful followers of Abraham ; in other words, to all, circumcised and uncircumcised, who walked according to that faith, which procured for Abraham, in the rite of circumcision, an outward and visible sign of the divine favour and acceptance.

But the text itself, together with the chapter in which it occurs, forms part of the general argument of the Epistle to the Romans : a just view of which argument, as a whole, is, therefore, plainly indispensable to the right understanding of this, as

well as of the several other subordinate topics of which it is composed.

From the period of the Reformation, it seems to have become the prevailing notion among doctrinal interpreters (a notion chiefly originating with Martin Luther), that the argument of the Epistle to the Romans, however apparently similar, differs essentially, in its nature and object, from that of any other epistle of Saint Paul. Justification by faith, indeed, it is on all sides admitted, forms the common theme of several of these letters. But the doctrine of the Epistle to the Romans, it is affirmed by the commentators in question, differs from that of all the Apostle's other epistles, in this respect; — that while, in the latter, justification by faith stands opposed to justification by the works of the law of Moses, — in Romans, on the other hand, justification by faith is placed in opposition to justification by the natural and moral law of God written on the hearts of men.

In the case of a distinction so broad and momentous as this, resting, as it does, upon mere human interpretations, unsanctioned by the voice of catholic consent, it is the legitimate privilege of Protestants to assert their right of private judgment, and freely to examine its grounds and authority by reference to God's written word, the

only final standard of appeal. Upon the present occasion, however, an argumentative appeal to Scripture would unavoidably carry us beyond the bounds of a single discourse; I shall avail myself, therefore, of a shorter method of dealing with the question, by proving, against the entire class of doctrinal interpreters alluded to, upon the evidence and authority of a prophet of their own, that the distinction now in question is a distinction without a difference, having its origin in an erroneous prejudgment of the case, and its natural and proper end in direct self-contradiction.

If any two of Saint Paul's epistles would seem to have been composed upon a common subject,—justification by faith,—the Epistle to the Romans, and that to the Galatians, will, with one consent, be admitted as the case in point. By doctrinal commentators generally, however, their identity of subject has been strenuously disallowed. Among others, the learned Macknight, who may fairly be taken to represent the interpreters of his own class, in his Preface to the Epistle to the Galatians, has thus stated the assumed fundamental difference in the doctrine of these epistles: “Although the subject treated of in the Epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians be the doctrine of *justification by faith*, the two epistles differ materially in this

respect, that the Epistle to the Romans was written to prove the justification of men by faith, *without works of law*, that is, without a perfect obedience to the law of God written on men's hearts; whereas the Epistle to the Galatians was designed to prove that men are justified by faith, *without the works of the law of Moses*."

The distinction here contended for, is drawn up in terms so clear and plain, as to leave no room for misconception of the writer's meaning:—justification without the works of the law of Moses is the theme, according to him, of the Epistle to the Galatians; justification, without the moral law of God, or at least without perfect obedience to it, that of the Epistle to the Romans. Let us now hear the same respectable authority, in his Preface to the Epistle to the Romans:—"The controversy," he here tells us, "concerning the obligation of the law of Moses, viewed in the light wherein I have placed it, was a matter of no small importance; since on its determination depended, whether *the law of Moses* or *the Gospel of Christ* should be the religion of the world. No wonder, therefore, that Saint Paul introduced this controversy in so many of his epistles; and that he wrote *three of them in particular, for the express purpose of confronting an error*, so plausible and so pernicious: I

mean his Epistles to the *Romans*, to the *Galatians*, and to the *Hebrews*.

These two statements involve a direct contradiction; and contradictory propositions cannot both be true: if, as is affirmed in the latter passage, the subject of the Epistle to the Romans be *justification without the works of the law of Moses*, it plainly cannot be, as alleged in the former, *justification without the works of the natural or moral law of God*.

But how, it will naturally be asked, shall we account for a lapse so strange and palpable, in a writer so laborious and so cautious as Dr. Macknight? The true account I believe to be simply this, that one of his opposed statements was written under the bias of inveterate theological prejudice; while the other contains the unconscious expression of his own unbiassed judgment; the result of actual review of the internal evidences of the epistles.

But the identity of subject between the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, which we have seen affirmed and denied by the same writer, almost in the same breath, is virtually decided by him in a third passage, taken from that very Preface to the Galatians, which asserts the opposite view. For in this place he acknowledges that justification

by faith without the works of the law of Moses, WAS THE ONE GRAND POINT AT ISSUE IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

“With respect to circumcision,” he observes, “and obedience to the law of Moses, if the Judaizers had been allowed to establish these as necessary to salvation, Judaism, as was observed in the Preface to the Romans, would have been the religion of the world, to the utter subversion of Christianity. In a word, *of all the questions respecting religion* which were agitated in the first age, *this* concerning the justification of *sinner*s by faith, *without the works of the law of Moses*, was the most interesting. By the establishment of that doctrine, a bulwark was raised against the re-entering of those superstitions which disfigured the preceding forms of religion. For, if the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law of Moses, which were all of Divine appointment, had no efficacy in procuring the pardon of sin, none of the rites of men’s invention, on which the superstitious set such a value, can have any influence in procuring that blessing. *Besides*, on the right determination of this question, the comfort of the Gentile converts of the first age, and the hope of salvation, hung. No wonder, then, that Paul, to whom Christ had committed the care and instruction of the Gentiles,

was zealous in teaching the doctrine of justification, *without the works of the law of Moses.*"

Now, since both the comfort of the Gentile converts, and the hope of salvation itself, depended, as this learned author justly pronounces, upon this very doctrine, there cannot exist a reasonable doubt, that a doctrine so all-important would be most especially taught, by the Apostle of the Gentiles, in the Epistle, beyond all the rest of his epistles, appropriated to the indoctrination of the Gentile world in the faith; when, therefore, we meet the doctrine of justification in his Epistle to the Romans, we possess the highest and surest antecedent evidence, that the justification spoken of is justification by faith, not, as has been groundlessly assumed, without the works of the moral law, but without the works of the law of Moses.

But the final settlement of the great question here at issue, as all Protestants, at least, are bound to agree, must depend upon the internal evidences of Scripture. To this infallible guide, accordingly, Dr. Macknight has appealed, to prove that the subject of the Epistle to the Galatians, as contradistinguished from that of the Romans, is justification without the works of the law of Moses.

His sole authorities for this conclusion, he acknowledges to be derived from certain texts of the

Epistle to the Galatians, in which, as he maintains, "the opposition between the works of the law, and the obedience of faith, and between the spirit and the flesh, plainly sheweth, that, by *the law* in this discourse, the Apostle means *the law of Moses*." The following are among his strongest examples: "He, then, who supplied to you the Spirit, and wrought miracles among you, did he these on account of the works of the law, or on account of the obedience of faith? Tell me, ye who wish to be under the law, why do ye not understand the law? Ye are separated from Christ, who are justified by the law."

But, if this mode of reasoning be sound, as applied to determine the subject of the Epistle to the Galatians, it must plainly be equally sound and legitimate, as applicable to the determination of the subject of the Epistle to the Romans. To the law and to the testimony, then, let us also appeal; and endeavour to ascertain the subject of the Romans, by a similar reference to the text of the epistles.

In the second chapter, the Apostle apparently intimates that he is about to treat of the Mosaic law, by instituting a direct comparison between the Jew and the Gentile,—an intimation which he immediately follows up by a twofold reference to

their respective laws — the law of Moses, and the law of nature and conscience — in terms, as it appears to me, so clear and plain, that he that runs may read: “For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in *the law*, shall be judged by *the law*. For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.”

The parties here opposed being Jew and Gentile, the laws thus placed in opposition to each other, can plainly be no other than their respective laws; the definite expression — the law — denoting the law of Moses; the indefinite — a law — the natural law of God, written in the hearts of men. The received rules of language would fix this sense upon the Apostle’s general statement; had he not himself fixed his meaning with a definiteness which dogmatic prejudice alone could overlook, when he adds, “For when the Gentiles, which have not *the law*, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, *having not the law*, are *a law* unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.” To affirm that *the law*, here, *must* mean the law of Moses, and *a law*,

as the Apostle declares, the law of conscience, may well, indeed, be regarded as the assertion of a truism — of a self-evident and undeniable truth. I gladly grant it, my brethren, since it gives the opportunity of reminding you, that **A NEGLECTED TRUISM IS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL TRUTHS.** In the case before us, for example, the single passage just cited, taken in the only intelligible sense of which it is capable, will suffice utterly to overthrow that modern scheme of interpretation, which would make the subject of the Epistle to the Romans to be justification by faith, not, as in the Galatians, in opposition to the law of Moses, but in opposition to God's moral law written in the hearts of men.

But the groundless distinction is equally done away by every subsequent verse of this chapter and by every succeeding chapter of the Epistle itself. Thus, when the Apostle proceeds,—“Behold, thou art called *a Jew*, and retest in *the law*,”—the law spoken of, beyond controversy, is the law of Moses. Again, when he indignantly asks,—“Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?”—that the Mosaic law, and this only, is intended, self-evidently appears. In the next chapter, where he proves the Jews guilty of sin out of their own Scriptures, when he concludes his awful summary, from their Psalms

and Prophets, in these words, "Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law;" in the opening of the seventh, when he thus directly addresses the Jews,—"Know ye not, brethren, (*for I speak to them that know the law*);" in the tenth, where he speaks of "Christ as the end of the law," and of *Moses* as describing the "righteousness which is of the law,"—is it possible for words more plainly to express, that his subject is, justification without the works of the law of Moses; or, in other words, the same as in his Epistle to the Galatians?*

The time will not allow of further accumulation of the proofs, which abound, to the same effect, throughout the Epistle. Suffice it to remark, generally, that the fact of the law of Moses, and not the natural law of conscience, being the theme of this letter, necessarily affects its whole interpretation. The opposition no longer lies, as doctrinal interpreters have assumed, between faith and works; but between faith, on the one hand,

* "Idem hîc dicit quod initio capitis 7. ad Romanos. *Planè germanæ istæ Epistolæ*; et validum est argumentum, si ne Judæos quidem Lex nunc obligat, multò minùs Gentes." (Grotius, in Galat. iii. 19.) His reasoning always logical. "Tangit præcipuum errorem Judæorum illius temporis, *ut et in Epistola ad Romanos.*" Grot. in Gal. iii. 21. — *i. e.* justification by law of Moses. Conf. context.

and the Mosaic law (both ritual and moral) on the other, as effectual means of fulfilling all righteousness. The Jews sought, in the law of Moses, that which law, even the divine law, from the very nature of law, never could bestow:—law, whether human or divine, is and can be nothing more than a scheme of precepts and prohibitions, of punishments and rewards; it can, indeed, hold out motives to obey, but it cannot give the spirit of obedience. Accordingly, the Mosaic law itself is described, in the New Testament, as a “letter which killeth.” To this dead letter, in which his infatuated countrymen vainly trusted, Saint Paul opposes the principle of faith, as fully revealed in the Gospel, but as known and evidenced even in the patriarchal times. For the law of commandments, proved to be barren and lifeless by melancholy experience of facts, he substitutes a religion of life, and grace, and power,—as that which alone could enable mankind to attain the end of the commandment.

The question really at issue, therefore, between Saint Paul and the Jews and Judaizing Christians, was a question, not of ends, but of means. Both (as in the commencement of the tenth Chapter the Apostle himself explicitly declares), both *nominally* aimed at the one great end,—obedience

to the holy moral law of God: but to procure this obedience, the Jews looked to the lifeless law of Moses, the Apostle to the living and life-giving Gospel of Christ; they vainly trusted in their own righteousness, he in the imparted righteousness of Christ. The merits of the rival principles were seen in their fruits: like the Gentiles who knew not God, the Jewish people had been long lost in wickedness; while the Christian Church already presented a glorious example of righteousness and true holiness.

In final proof that such is the scope of Saint Paul's argument in his Epistle to the Romans, and that the whole intermediate reasoning of this Epistle is directed, not, as has been conceived by some, to the exaltation of faith, in contradistinction to its necessary fruits, righteousness and true holiness,—not to the setting up of a forensic and imputed righteousness, in opposition to those good works unto which the same Apostle teaches that the new man (every regenerated Christian) is created; but to the setting aside of a vain trust in man's own righteousness, as distinct from that communicated by the grace of Christ,—and in the mere letter of the Mosaic law;—in final proof of this, it seems needful only to point out the clear antithetical connection between the exhi-

bition of moral depravity in the first chapters of the Epistle, and the exhortations to practical holiness, purity, and goodness, which wholly occupy the four concluding chapters. Thus, in the first chapter, we read of the Gentile world, as, in the second, of the Jewish nation, that "God gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour *their own bodies* between themselves."

In immediate contrast with this picture of the natural man, at the opening of the twelfth chapter we read,—“I beseech you, *therefore*, brethren,” (that is, by all the intermediate considerations now placed before you), “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present *your bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” Did time allow, we could show that the practical address of the concluding chapters is similarly opposed, throughout, to the fearful portrait of human depravity drawn in the exordium of the Epistle; but this specimen may, at present, suffice to draw attention to the internal evidences, in this most important view.

The subject, then, of the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, is strictly one and the same,—justification by faith, instead of by the Mosaic law. And conformably with their identity of subject, not only similar sentiments, but the same expressions, and the same illustrations, occur throughout these Epistles. Among the illustrations which they possess in common, that taken from the case of Abraham stands the most prominent. And his introduction brings us, in conclusion, to the words of the text, and to the subject of this day's commemoration. The case of Abraham is most justly and forcibly introduced into the general argument of the Epistle to the Romans, as an example, conclusive against the Jewish objectors, of justification by faith, without the works of the Mosaic law; since the approved faith of this father of the faithful, not only long preceded the giving of the law, but even preceded his reception into covenant with God by the rite of circumcision; which rite the Apostle defines as the seal or stamp of the divine approval and acceptance of his pre-existing faith.

But circumcision, according to Saint Paul, was not only the seal of Abraham's prior and personal faith and righteousness; it was also the mystical sign of the adoption into his family of *all*

who should hereafter give like evidence of the same divine principle: "And," says the Apostle in the text, "he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be a father of *all* them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed to them also: and the father of the circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised."

In its spiritual sense, therefore, the circumcision of Abraham remains an inheritance and a blessing to all faithful members of the Church of Christ; "the circumcision," as Saint Paul in the context expresses it, "of the heart; in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

But, to inherit the blessing conveyed by Abraham's seal, men must become heirs and emulators of the faith of Abraham. Now his faith, as exemplified in Scripture, was a source, at once, and series of good works. And the words of Genesis, accordingly, in which the Apostle describes it as "counted or imputed to him for righteousness," it is most remarkable, are the very words in which

the Septuagint version of the 106th Psalm describes the recompense of Phinehas, for the good work which he wrought, in slaying the impious Zimri (the original Hebrew of both passages being also identical); a fact which proves the meaning of the phrase to be,—to give credit for good really done, for service actually performed.

Would we, then, brethren, be true children of Abraham? would we inherit the spiritual blessing sealed to him by the rite of circumcision?—let us, in entering upon another year of our earthly probation, resolve, by God's grace, to realize, in our future lives, the prayer of our Church upon this hallowed day:—"Almighty God, who madest thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man,—grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit: that, our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal desires, we may, in all things, obey thy blessed will; through the same thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*"

SERMON VIII.

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

PSALM, xxvii. 4.

“ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”

THE universal consent and practice of mankind have identified the idea of public worship with the very name and notion of religion. We are taught by the most uniform evidence ever, perhaps, furnished by experience, that this idea is essential to the existence of religion in any form amongst men.

The fanes and idols of the heathen world teach this great first truth, equally with the temples and the altars consecrated to the service of the most high God : insomuch that the duty of public worship, thus doubly sanctioned, by God's voice in natural religion, and by his revealed will and word, can stand in need of nothing to recommend it to

our most serious attention, on any occasion, but awakened consciences, prepared minds, and thoroughly interested hearts.

In the humble hope that it is with such preparation of mind and heart we are this day gathered together, it is my purpose to set before you such reflections on the public worship of Almighty God, its character and design, its origin and use, as may seem seasonable and profitable on the present solemn occasion.

For the origin of this branch of religious duty, we must ascend to the first age of mankind, and to a primeval revelation. The sacrifices of Cain and Abel, of Noah and the patriarchs, were acts of divine ordinance, and of visible and public worship. From the calling of Moses, and the exode of the children of Israel out of Egypt, the public worship of Jehovah became more and more the subject of divine revelation; until, by the visible abode of the divine presence on Mount Sion, and the building and dedication of the Temple of Jerusalem, God, through his Holy Spirit, vouchsafed to declare his peculiar presence in the congregations of the faithful, and to annex the best promises and privileges of religion, to the due celebration of his temple-worship.

It were easy to enlarge upon the general design

and usefulness of this divine appointment. To judge only by common sense, and the reason which God hath given us, we cannot but be aware how consonant to this it is, that, as the common offspring of the same heavenly Father, men should meet together in prayer to Him, lifting up holy hands; and together render thanks for those bounties of his providence, and blessings of his grace and favour, of which they are in common partakers. By the same method of inquiry, we may reach the further conclusion, that whatever beneficial effects and influences are drawn down by prayer, will be drawn down in larger measure and proportion where the *faithful* applicants are many in number, and that each individual member may rightly hope to profit by the united offering of the congregation. If, as the word of God assures us, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," we, my brethren, may well rest assured, that the effectual fervent prayer of *many* righteous shall avail yet more abundantly.

But it will be more important for us, on the present occasion, to consider and examine the uses of public worship by the light of God's word; to mark what Scripture has revealed concerning its part and place in all true religion,—the promises there pronounced on its due observance,

and the practical benefits there exemplified as resulting from it.

And, here, the prayer of King Solomon, at the dedication of the Temple, naturally presents itself, in the first instance, for our guidance. "O Lord my God, hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee to-day: that thine eyes may be open towards this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place. And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place: and when thou hearest, forgive."

This inspired petition clearly supposes a promise, under the Old Testament dispensation, of God's peculiar presence in the house consecrated to his name and the public services of religion. It further implies a pledge that the prayers congregationally offered by the faithful in that house, should be hearkened to and accepted with peculiar grace and favour; whether they implore the continuance of the divine mercies toward the chosen people, or the healing of their spiritual infirmities and forgiveness of their sins.

When we look to the declarations of the New Testament on the duty of public worship, we find each hope and promise derivable from the prayer of Solomon, explicitly continued and confirmed. Does the prayer of the dedication suppose God's special presence in his house of prayer? Christ our Lord testifies, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Does the prayer intimate a more than ordinary willingness on the part of Almighty God to hear and receive petitions, offered in the congregation of the faithful? our blessed Saviour adds this witness, for the direction of *his* followers, "If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that ye shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

These gracious announcements from the divine Truth Himself are suitably opened and expounded in the writings of his Apostles. Saint Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, assigns a foremost place to the exhortation, that they should not forsake the assembling of themselves together, but rather, by diligent attendance on the duties of public prayer and public exhortation, that they should consider one another—their common infirmities, their common wishes, their common

temporal and spiritual wants — to provoke unto love, and to good works; while Saint James, in a very remarkable passage of his general Epistle, points out the benefits arising to others as well as to ourselves from the prayer of faith offered up in the congregation: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

But from the joint testimony of the Old and New Testaments, it further appears, not only that public worship is essential, in a general view, to the existence of religion, but that special promises are annexed to the due observance of it; and that our individual participation in the best benefits and blessings of the Gospel covenant, is essentially dependent on the spirit in which we individually fulfil this great branch of Christian duty.

And here the subject of discourse leads us to inquire, *what* are the particular blessings and benefits promised unto those who duly serve and honour the Almighty God, their heavenly Father, in his house of prayer; an inquiry which cannot fail to profit those who hear, whether as producing, in some, serious and salutary reflection

on what may have been lost by past omissions, or stirring up in others a warmer spirit of devotion, and a more lively zeal, by the motives and the hopes which it will be found to set before them.

In this inquiry, the voice of Holy Scripture, and the experience and testimony of God's faithful worshippers there recorded, are our best and only guides. But, not to multiply authorities, I would here confine myself to the experience and testimony of the royal psalmist; from the lesson of whose example I would set before you the following important truths. 1. First, that Almighty God hath ordained his public worship to be a chief source, in the day of prosperity, of religious peace and joy. 2. And secondly, that in its ordinances and observances are graciously provided a sure refuge for the faithful in times of adversity and affliction.

1. In the 122nd Psalm, we find a matchless example of the tendency of our waiting diligently upon God in his house of prayer to produce a spirit of religious joyfulness and peace in the heart. "I was glad," exclaims the good King David, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." The very naming of God's house called up thoughts of glad-

ness. The invitation to enter it rejoiced his righteous soul. And why? He thought doubtless upon the past; he remembered his habitual attendance before Jehovah in that holy place, and the fruits of that attendance; he knew, by good experience, the glory of God in his sanctuary, the light of the divine presence, which there, of old, was wont to descend and rest upon himself and his fellow-worshippers; he felt revive within him anew, at the grateful summons, the emotions of peace and joy, of praise and thanksgiving, which, in consort with those very companions, who now, once more, invited him to the same glad communion of voice and spirit before God, he had so often partaken in these holy exercises. Animated by such sentiments and recollections, he thus gives them utterance with joyful lips: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Once engaged in meditation on this blessed theme, the spirit of the psalmist knoweth no other rest. The holy joy wherewith he contemplates the habitation of the Lord, diffuses itself abroad in blessings upon the city that surrounds "the place where his honour dwelleth." He blesses the very gates and walls of Jerusalem; her thrones and her palaces are precious in his sight: he prays that peace and prosperity may dwell within them; and

this, because of his love for the congregation there assembled, and the desire of his heart towards the temple of the Lord. "For my brethren and companions' sakes," is his joyful conclusion, "I will now say, Peace be within thee! Yea, because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek to do thee good."

By the spirit and example of David in this Psalm, we are thus delightfully taught the use and advantage of devout, habitual attendance, on God's public worship in the day of prosperity. We are instructed to regard this great branch of duty as a peculiar source of religious peace and joy, and its devout and diligent observance as a means pregnant with the dew of the heavenly blessing to our souls. With fervent aspirations of the heart towards God, we see happily blended the genuine overflowings of brotherly fellowship and love; while each sentence of the psalmist's lips, and sentiment of his heart, recalls to our remembrance the house of prayer, as the rich fountain of so many blessings.

2. In the 27th Psalm, David manifests the same spirit of devout delight in the public services of religion, and a like deep and heart-felt sense of the benefits flowing peculiarly from this source. Only his delight is here chastened by

experience of the changes and chances of this mortal life, and his sense of spiritual benefits rendered deeper and more lively, by the need in which he now stood of their presence to support and strengthen him.

For the joyful exclamation, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord," we find in the words of the text expressions of a more solemn and reflective character. "One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." This in the language of a mind thrown inwards upon itself, and led by circumstances to search out truth in its inmost recesses; the language of a heart requiring some sufficient stay; and drawn to seek that stay in the profounder depths of religion.

Whither, then, does he betake himself for sure refuge? To the house, my brethren, and the public worship of his God. And why? Let us hear his own reasoning on this matter, and so hear that we may go and do likewise. "One thing," saith David, "have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty

of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me ; he shall set me upon a rock. Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy ; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord." .

The remainder of the psalm is in the same devout strain of trust in God, and sure reliance on *His* presence in his sanctuary, to support, succour, strengthen him in the hour of affliction. " When thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek : " expressions plainly in unison with the reference of the text, to temple-service ; the healing influence of which upon the heart, under suffering and sorrow, is thus beautifully delivered in the concluding verses, — " Verily I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart ; wait, I say, on the Lord. "

By the spirit and example of King David we thus, again, are taught the use and advantage of devout habitual attendance in God's house of prayer, to shield us amidst the withering blasts of adversity and affliction. The deep spiritual experience of the man after God's own heart, is here graciously given us for our guidance, teaching

that, to worship the Lord in his sanctuary with a true heart, is amongst the best preparations attainable against the ills of life, and exhorting to patient continuance in this holy worship, by the conscious blessedness which he had himself experienced from it. "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

But if, as we are assured by an inspired authority, "all Scripture is given us for our instruction," certainly those scriptures which immediately concern our daily duty and service to Almighty God, and which relate to the great business of personal religion, are peculiarly to be received and studied, as sent by His Holy Spirit to guide, govern, and direct us in the right way. When, therefore, we read the declaration of king David, "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord," we in fact receive a message and commandment from our God, to examine and search into our own hearts, and see whether the summons to His house of prayer, is there met in the same spirit of religious joyfulness? Again, when we learn what was the one supreme desire of the holy Psalmist's soul,—“that he might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life,”—the call from heaven is equally distinct and clear, which invites us to

inquire and consider whether we possess and cherish the same spirit of devotion; whether, with holy David, we too desire “to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”

Now, the very notions of gladness and of desire imply an interest, a real, present, conscious interest, taken in the objects and pursuits which awaken these emotions. Where there is want of this interest, where there is anything of practical, habitual indifference towards the subject contemplated, whatever this may be, it is a perversion of language to say we desire or rejoice in its contemplation, for the feelings themselves are wholly incompatible with our state of mind.

But the ideas of desire and gladness further suppose familiarity, with the subjects which call them forth. Men are not wont, it is not in human nature, to take pleasure in objects to which they are strangers — in pursuits with which they are practically unacquainted. There must be use; there must be familiarity; or to speak of joyful or pleasurable emotions is vain.

The application is direct and plain as made to the great subject of religion, and especially to that branch of it with which my present duty lies — the public worship of Almighty God. We cannot feel desire to enter his house of prayer, we cannot

experience gladness of heart at the summons to attend it, unless our interest in the great concern of religion be lively and unfeigned; unless, by a devout familiarity with the daily service of God's temple, we have learnt, from the depths of the heart, to know and reverence the great Inhabitant. In the intercourse of life, we enter without interest or pleasure the house of one that is a stranger to us, and to whose situation, character, and habits we are ourselves strangers. But the sensation felt is very different, when we are invited to enter the habitation of a friend whom we have long and closely known, when we approach the house of a father in which we have from youth up resided. So it is, also, in religion. If we come to the house of God, as to that of one who is a stranger to us; if we are ourselves strangers to this great duty of religion, our part in the offices of his public worship must, from the necessity of the case, be performed without interest or pleasure, and therefore without profit. If, on the other hand, by long and good experience, we have learnt to know God; to know him as he is, — infinitely merciful, compassionate, and gracious; if we have familiarized ourselves with his Temple, as what in truth and reality it is, the abode of an Almighty Friend, and of our Heavenly Father, then each summons to his pre-

sence will indeed fill our hearts with joy and gladness; and every opportunity afforded us of waiting on Jehovah in his house of prayer, will infallibly find an answer in our hearts in the words of the royal Psalmist, "I was glad when they said unto me, we will go into the house of the Lord."

It is essential to the very existence of an interest like this, in the great duty of public worship, that we should be habitually exercised in the practice of it; that we should be familiarly conversant with the honour paid and the petitions offered up to God, in the congregation of the faithful. But to cherish and mature this interest so that it shall become practical and fruitful, it is indispensable, further, that we diligently watch over and attend to the frame in which we approach the House of God: for, otherwise, danger may arise even from the frequency of our attendance upon the church services, and an indevout familiarity, degenerate into practical indifference and neglect. And here there are two considerations necessary to be had in view, in order to a due preparation: first, the outward frame of our bodies; and, secondly, the inward frame of our souls; for body and soul are so composed together and blended in our nature, that neither can render unto God "the honour due unto his name," without the aid and concurrence

of the other. That the soul should be in a fit posture to take its better part in the service of the sanctuary, it is hence of high moment that the posture of the body should be such as to give us constant notice of the duty in which we are employed. To this end, our carriage in church should be made strict matter of conscience; our whole manner should be grave, reverent, and recollected, suitable to the humble and reverential positions of the body, which Holy Scripture and the Catholic Church unite to enjoin, and which cannot be omitted without sensible and serious injury to such as fail in their observance. Here every direction to be found in your prayer-books ought to be studied and put in practice, especially in humbly and reverentially "kneeling down upon your knees," wheresoever this is enjoined, that is, throughout the prayers, the collects, and the parts prescribed in the communion service. The point cannot be too strongly dwelt on; for the bending of the outward knee in homage to Almighty God is, assuredly, the best and only adequate preparative for bowing down before him, on what a great Christian statesman, Mr. Burke, has emphatically termed, "the knees of the heart."

But the inward reverence of the soul to which this outward reverence leads, is to be our primary

and main consideration. Unless we make the cultivation of this spirit our daily study and delight, in vain do we offer unto God our lip or knee service. The religion which can profit us in church, must be of home growth; it must be acquired in our families, and nurtured in our closets. The study of the Holy Scriptures and of other good books, religious conversation, regular family, and, above all, constant and fervent private prayer, form together the preparation of heart required for the due celebration of God's public worship. If, then, ye desire to approve yourselves before God in this his house of prayer, it well becomes you to recollect "what manner of persons ye should be in all holy conversation and godliness."

If you pursue faithfully this wise and worthy course, you will, under God, entitle yourselves to the privileges, and qualify yourselves for the enjoyments which holy David of old, experienced in the public services of religion. Like him you will find the house of the Lord your best safeguard in prosperity; and in adverse fortunes, — in every hour of temptation and time of trial, — your sure shelter and stay. To him who thus enters with gladness into the House of the Lord, the promise is secure, that his heavenly Father "will know his soul in adversity;" and, "in the time of trouble, will hide

him under the shadow of his wings." If any among you unhappily fail to walk in this way, let him remember, when his bitter hour of affliction comes, when he sees himself deserted by every human friend, that if he finds no succour, hope, or comfort in religion, the fault is altogether his own. To such there is no promise; for such there is no appointed and provided refuge. The house of God will be to them no house of prayer in their calamity, who in the day of their prosperity had made it "a den of thieves," the receptacle of unholy thoughts, ungoverned passions, and irreverent negligence and levity. But better things, I trust, my brethren, may be hoped for from you. Sanctify, then, your future attendance in this holy place, by henceforth sanctifying, through the grace of his Holy Spirit, the Lord God in your hearts; and teach others by your good example the wisdom and the blessedness of the Psalmist's resolution in the text, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

SERMON IX.

THE USES OF ADVERSITY.

ECCLUS. ii. 5.

“Gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity.”

THE word of God and the experience of man unite in bearing witness to the great mystery of Divine mercy, here brought to view by the son of Sirach; that mystery of infinite wisdom and goodness, which dispenses trial and affliction, as the proper portion, the peculiar inheritance, if we may so speak, of the chosen children of God.

Whatever differences of opinion may have arisen in other Christian communities, whatever may, unhappily, subsist within our own Church, respecting the authority of that portion of the Old Testament, of which the book of Ecclesiasticus composes a prominent and edifying feature; there can be neither doubt nor difference as to the weight attaching to the passage immediately before us; for will any who profess to receive the

Old and the New Testaments as the oracles of God,—will any who believe the Scriptures recognized by all the churches under heaven, presume to question, that our present text speaks the genuine language, and breathes the very spirit of the canonical Scriptures?

But the lodgment which Divine truth, in itself thus pregnant, and thus authoritatively recommended, is so well qualified to make in the understanding and the heart, may not, therefore, be regarded as an effect peculiar to this one instructive sentence: the chapter whence the text is derived, partakes, throughout, of the same authoritative character; partakes of the authority of inspiration in so high measure and degree, that, while the master truth which it unfolds is a truth unfolded and enforced, directly or indirectly, in every part of the sacred Canon,—it may yet be affirmed, as a fact beyond all controversy, that no where throughout the Bible is this great experimental truth to be found, at once so fully embodied, so instructively expanded, and so affectingly inculcated, as in this second chapter of the book of Ecclesiasticus.

To this chapter accordingly (I speak from actual knowledge of a fact, equally familiar, doubtless, to some who hear), to this chapter, those

most conversant with the sacred Scriptures have been instinctively wont to resort, as to a city of refuge, in days of trouble, adversity, and affliction.

A portion of the Holy Bible, thus fruitful to edification, thus profitable, as a source of strength and consolation, under the heaviest ills and sorest trials of life, cannot fail richly to repay a more close and attentive consideration; while such consideration, moreover, however imperfect and inadequate, may yet render no unimportant service, if it lead the mind, betimes, to familiar converse with the counsels here written for our instruction; and so prepare and qualify us, in our hour of need, the better to apprehend, and the more wisely to profit by them. To aid you, my brethren, and me in opening for ourselves a way to this more profitable understanding, shall be the simple aim of the following discourse; in which I purpose to adopt the order, the words, and (if, with the Divine blessing, it may so be) the spirit of the son of Sirach,—and thus to present the chapter as, what in truth and reality it is,—a sermon on the text.

The subject of this chapter, though with very opposite effects, is the mystery of tried, and tempted, and suffering virtue—one alike familiar, to the heathen, the Jewish, and the Christian world

— one which ever has been, and which ever must be, accounted a hard saying by all, save the faithful few, who have learnt to receive it as children of God, — as the dutiful, confiding offspring of the most tender, true, and compassionate of parents, even that heavenly Father, “who doth nor afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men!”

To the worldly and irreligious heart, whether Gentile, Jew, or Christian by profession, the trials and troubles of good men have always proved a stumbling-block and rock of offence, and one of the most fatal sources of, at least, practical atheism. Nor can this awaken wonder or surprise when we consider, how sensibly even David himself was affected, on a first view, by the unequal distribution of temporal good and evil. “Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. When I thought to understand this, it was too painful for me.”

With a reach of faith and piety equally transcending the knowledge of his day and the practice of our own, the son of Sirach, in the chapter whence the text is drawn, sets the whole matter in its only true light.

Instead of questioning, with the infidel, the

Divine wisdom and justice, in thus visiting evil upon the good; instead of complaining, with the Psalmist, of the darkness, and doubts, and mental disquietudes, apparently inseparable from such dispensations, the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus, in the place before us, reaches the true principle and explanation by taking the directly opposite view.

The principle which he lays down as the text of his whole edifying discourse, is briefly this,—that God's service is a service of trial, and most so to His most favoured servants. And from this first principle, wisely embraced and faithfully pursued, he causes to flow, or rather exhibits flowing, a perennial stream of peace and consolation.

The chapter opens with a general view of its subject,—a brief statement of the difficulties and the demands of a religious life. “My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and make not haste in time of trouble. Cleave unto him, and depart not away, that thou mayest be increased at thy last end. Whatsoever is brought upon thee take cheerfully, and be patient when thou art changed to a low estate.” The true reason of which precepts, and the as true reasonableness of our faithful and implicit compliance

with them, are thus summed up in the impressive words of the text: "For gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity." Words full of comfort and encouragement to every religious mind; for what truly religious minds can shrink from or sink under trials, — once rightly prepared and thoroughly persuaded, in the spirit of the son of Sirach, to receive their trials as proofs that they are indeed the chosen and accepted servants, — the peculiar and highly-favoured children of God?

But the words of the text, you will observe, can be full of comfort and encouragement to religious minds only, to whom alone they are addressed: those who "come to serve the Lord;" who come, not with vague desire merely, but with holy determination, to believe God's word, to trust his promises, and, through Divine aid, in all times, and states, and circumstances, to do and suffer his blessed will.

For the better direction of such hopeful candidates for life and immortality, the heaven-taught teacher, passing on from the general view of his subject, proceeds to lay down more particular instructions; to place before them the means whereby alone they may attain the desired end of their service, even "the salvation of their souls;" exhorting

them, with all diligence, to walk in the straight way of belief and obedience, to wait on the Lord in the sure though narrow path of patience, faith, and hope: "Believe in him, and he will help thee; order thy way aright, and trust in him. Ye that fear the Lord, wait for his mercy; and go not aside, lest ye fall. Ye that fear the Lord, believe him; and your reward shall not fail. Ye that fear the Lord, hope for good, and for everlasting joy and mercy." To prove these sentiments virtually inspired, we have only to cite the language of unquestioned inspiration; to remind you of the words of Saint Paul, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall;" and of the still more kindred declaration of the same great Apostle: "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given us." A passage in which the whole train of thought is manifestly identical with, and apparently suggested by this place of Ecclesiasticus.

Those who by the eye of a lively and steadfast faith have, after the precepts of the son of Sirach, and the pattern of Saint Paul, happily learnt to discern the goodness of God even in the midst of

their tribulations, will never want for the will, and seldom for the opportunity, of marking the faithfulness of his promises, and the compensations of his ever-watchful Providence, both in the experience of others, and in their own. But the faith of the many is weak in these high matters; and that even of the most faithful, comparatively shortsighted. Or, though faith be strong, trial will prove sometimes stronger; and present troubles and calamities be too powerful, for a confidence, and hope, and trust in God, resting solely on our own limited personal experience or observation.

But while those "changes of the right hand of the Most High," which bring joy out of sorrow, and so often evince the severest trials of the righteous, to be so many blessings in disguise, are thus imperfectly discernible by God's servants, when the view is confined to their own case or generation, there is yet a point of view, a commanding eminence, whence the eye of faith can survey the course of Providence with unerring judgment — the experience of preceding ages.

To this triumphant test and witness of the sure mercies of God, the son of Sirach, accordingly, next raises the thoughts and hearts of all his afflicted and fainting servants. "Look at the generations of old and see: did ever any trust in the

Lord, and was confounded? or did any abide in his fear, and was forsaken? or whom did he ever despise that called upon him? For the Lord is full of compassion and mercy; long suffering, and very pitiful; and forgiveth sins, and saveth in time of affliction." Who, that are indeed true and faithful servants of their Lord, but must feel their thoughts and hearts "burn within them," as they catch the righteous confidence inspired by this appeal? an appeal, which leaves no condition of the faithful unprovided, while it makes their darkest clouds of present ill, or seeming ill, fade away and vanish before the sunshine of God's tender mercies, seen reflected in the glass of time. Are the faithful tried by the shock of sudden and overwhelming calamity? they are here sustained and revived by the consolatory inquiry (an inquiry more eloquently convincing and conclusive, than the strongest of human convictions or conclusions), "Did ever any trust in the Lord and was confounded?" Are they disheartened by the experience, or the apprehension, of some darker dispensation of Providence; by the seeming hiding, notwithstanding an inward consciousness of their own unshaken fidelity, of God's face from them? their failing hearts are lifted up by the cheering question of remembrance, — "Did any *abide* in his fear, and was forsaken?" Or,

lastly, have they, in an unguarded hour, unhappily fallen from their own steadfastness; have they been, as the Apostle expresses it, "overtaken in a fault," — betrayed into error, or surprised into offence, — they are mercifully put in remembrance, that the God whom they serve is, in truth, a God of mercy; and that his merciful compassion is ever open to the voice of penitence and prayer, — "or whom — *whom* did he ever despise that called upon him?"

The several states of mind, and kinds of trial, implied in this threefold inquiry, are, it will be observed, successively provided for in the closing sentence: that "the Lord is full of compassion and mercy," is held forth as encouragement to those who labour under the shock of sudden calamity, to trust confidently in him; that he "is long-suffering, and very pitiful," is given as a sure ground of hope to those who, amidst protracted trial, steadfastly "abide in his fear;" while, for the raising up of "them that fall," the restoration of the truly penitent, whom his merciful chastisement shall have led to arise and return unto their God,—these are reminded of the comforting reality, that *their Lord* is one "who forgiveth sins, and saveth in time of affliction."

But, as sad experience too largely teaches, it is not enough that men be drawn, into that service

which is "perfect freedom," by a sense of the divine mercies, they must be persuaded, also, by "the terrors of the Lord;" and knowing, with the Apostle, these heart-appalling terrors, like him, the son of Sirach would so preach, as to persuade men to flee from them. In this spirit, accordingly, he accompanies his exhortations to "constant continuance in well-doing," and his touching invitations to repentance, with the most fearful denuncements against the impenitent: not, you will take notice, against grievous offenders only, but against all who fall short of the just measure, in their service of God: "Woe be to fearful hearts, and faint hands, and the sinner that goeth two ways! Woe unto him that is faint-hearted! for he believeth not; therefore, shall he not be defended. Woe unto you that have lost patience! and what will ye do, when the Lord shall visit you?"

The inspired authority of these awful denunciations appears from hence,—that they are conceived and expressed in the very spirit of Saint Paul, who earnestly exhorts the followers of Christ Jesus, not to "be weary or faint in their minds;" to "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for their feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the

way;" and in that of Saint James, when he thus warns the self-deceivers of his day,—“cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded!" and when, almost in the words of the closing woe in Ecclesiasticus, he pronounces the “double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

The fearful and faint-hearted, the faithless and the wavering, those who halt or hesitate between the ways of death, and of life,—between the slavery of this world, and the service of God,—these double-minded self-deceivers, thus awfully warned, the son of Sirach, lastly, resumes, and rises upon his proper subject,—the character and righteous confidence of the tried servants of God: and concludes a discourse, than which, a nobler, or more edifying, never fell from the lips or pen of inspired man, in words on which it were worse than vain to comment or enlarge,—words which breathe “fire from the altar,” into every prepared and faithful heart. “They that fear the Lord, will not disobey his word; and they that love him, will keep his ways. They that fear the Lord, will seek that which is well-pleasing unto him; and they that love him, shall be filled with the law. They that fear the Lord, will prepare their hearts, and humble their souls in his sight, saying, ‘We

will fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men: for as his majesty is, so is his mercy!"

With ourselves, brethren, it must now rest to judge, as between God and our own consciences, whether we fall under the description of those, against whom the woes written in this chapter are denounced; or, whether we can be numbered among those, who "come to serve the Lord," and who are, thence, happily entitled, in the spirit of Jesus, the son of Sirach, to "glory in tribulation," and to discern blessed grounds of peace, and hope, and joy, in the darkest dispensations of their heavenly Father. Let us now judge ourselves in this matter, that we be not hereafter judged of the Lord. Are any among us, consciously fearful, faint-hearted, and wavering in God's service,—is there one here present, "who walketh in two ways,"—let them receive the woes here pronounced, as a timely and merciful warning, as "a message from God unto them;" let them, even now, "break off their sins by righteousness;" and begin this day, through Divine assistance sought in penitence and prayer, a true and faithful service of the best of masters. Those, on the other hand, who possess the happy consciousness of walking before their Lord in sincerity and truth, who

already dwell in his abiding faith, and fear, and love,—such spirits (and we trust there are such spirits here) will need no human preacher's voice to remind them, that, if we would find comfort from the edifying subject of the present discourse, in our hour of sickness, or of sorrow, we will make this chapter of Ecclesiasticus the frequent theme of study and meditation, in our days of health and happiness. So, under the heaviest visitations, or what the men of this world account such, shall we be enabled to rest, in calm assurance of faith that "all is well;" that, probably in a lower, certainly in the best and highest sense, "the times of refreshing *will* come from the presence of the Lord."

SERMON X.

THE CENTURION OF CAPERNAUM.

SAINT MATTHEW, viii. 10.

“ When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said unto them that followed, ‘ Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.’ ”

THE incident, which gave rise to this very remarkable testimony, is thus related in the Gospel of Saint Matthew: “ And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home, sick (of the palsy), grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.” Then come

the words of the text:— “When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said unto them that followed, verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

The circumstances of the story are preserved more fully by Saint Luke; who records this additional mark of the centurion’s humility, that he came not himself into our Lord’s presence, to prefer his petition; but sent, first, elders of the Jews, and next some chosen friends, to open unto the blessed Jesus the subject of his grief, and to ask that his bond-servant (for so it is in the original), “who was dear unto him,” might be healed.

Saint Matthew’s narrative, however, is sufficiently full and clear for my purpose in this discourse; which is, to inquire into the character of that belief in Christ, and in the nature and authority of his mission, which thus entitled a gentile proselyte to preeminence, in the sight of God, above the sons of Israel, and drew from him “who knew what was in man,” the witness recorded in his Gospel.

In this view of the subject, the following heads of inquiry naturally present themselves: first, the character and extent of the faith of Israel in our Lord’s day; and secondly, the peculiar ex-

cellence in that of the centurion, which distinguished it from, and raised it above, what Christ had found among the Jews. These topics I propose now to consider; and I shall subjoin some short practical inferences.

1. Agreeably to the mention of it in the text, I am to inquire into the character and extent of the faith of Israel in our Lord's day.

And I would begin by observing that our Lord's allusion in the text to the faith of Israel, plainly has reference only to his disciples, and the believing Jews; of whom alone it could be said that they professed faith in him. Among the children of Abraham who waited on his ministry, and witnessed his miracles, some, we are told, doubted, others hardened themselves in unbelief, others, again, ascribed the wonders wrought to diabolical possession; and, notwithstanding the clearest evidence to the contrary from the very nature of the works, with impious malignity exclaimed, "He hath a devil," or "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the prince of the devils." To such unworthy and wicked men, the text, I repeat, can have no allusion, for they possessed not, in its lowest form, the principle of faith.

But some there were in Israel "not faithless but believing," who, however materially they differed

in the measure of their faith, in their apprehension of Christ's character, or estimate of his works and mission, were still agreed in receiving him as a prophet, or at least a teacher, sent from God, and in a general belief, founded on the evidence of his miracles, that of a truth "God was with him." From this part of the Jewish community it is, that I would deduce the nature and extent of the faith of Israel, at the period of our Lord's earthly ministry.

Some instances of this faith, if faith it may be here entitled, are indeed so low, that they seem scarcely to have extended beyond the conviction, grounded on recent experience of the fact, that Christ had power to heal their bodily diseases, and supply their temporal wants, in a supernatural manner; and the hope, arising out of that conviction, that the temporal benefits received, were only pledges and presages of like benefits to be expected. Such, not to multiply examples, was the case of the multitude who followed Jesus over the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum, related in the sixth chapter of Saint John's Gospel. The nature and extent of their belief we are at no loss to discover, for our Lord has himself explained it. "Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles,

but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

Nor, is the nominal confession of belief in Jesus, as the Christ, which we find in the same Gospel, and which was made probably by the same people, of much greater value. When our Lord discoursed in the Temple, during the feast of tabernacles, his hearers, fondly interpreting in their carnal sense his spiritual meaning, were ready in expression of their willingness to receive Him as their Messiah, who, to the former proofs of his power to appease their hunger, added the promise of living waters to allay their thirst. "Many of the people," says the Evangelist, "when they heard that saying, said, of a truth this is the prophet: others said, this is the Christ." The outward confession was more full, but the principle was unaltered:—by the Sea of Galilee they believed, because they did eat of the loaves; in the Temple, because they thirsted after the promised fountains of water.

Examples, however, of a faith really and essentially higher, *are* to be found among those, who were healed of their diseases, by our blessed Lord; whose cure was, in some instances, avowedly performed in recompense and virtue of their faith. In which reckoning we are bound to include the faith of some who brought the sick to Jesus: for

in these the light of faith often shone more brightly, than in the parties presented to be healed. The case of the leper noticed in the chapter whence the text is derived, of the woman having an issue of blood, and of the blind man mentioned by Saint John, stand prominent in the former class : while those of Jairus, the ruler, and of the believing Jewish nobleman, whose son lay sick of a fever in this same city of Capernaum, are deservedly conspicuous in the latter.

But we naturally look for the highest and most perfect exemplification, in our Lord's affianced followers and disciples ; among those, who not only had owned the divine mission ; but who waited continually on the ministry of the blessed Jesus,—who daily heard his words, and saw his works, and witnessed his heavenly life and conversation. True it is, that the faith of the disciples was too commonly lowered, and their apprehension of his character and office clouded and obscured, by the notions, which, in common with their Jewish countrymen, they entertained of the temporal kingdom of their Messiah. Still, notwithstanding this national prepossession, there were those among them, who, with higher hopes and better anticipations, “waited for the consolation of Israel ;” who caught

livelier glimpses of the truth as it was in Jesus, and gave early witness to it. Such witness we discover in the visit of Nicodemus, in the confession of Nathanael, and in the ardent, yet profoundly significant, testimony of Simon Peter. The faith of these disciples led them early to discern, not only that Jesus was a teacher sent from God, who had the words of eternal life, — but that he was indeed the Christ—the Son of God, and King of Israel. And if, at this period, there may be reasonable doubt entertained of the ripeness and consistency of Saint Peter's faith, at least the subsequent conduct of Nicodemus and Nathanael place beyond question their apprehension, from the beginning, of Christ's spiritual dominion.

These are among the best specimens which we possess of the faith that was then in Israel. Yet were these examples transcended by the example of one, by birth an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and by education a stranger to the covenant of promise; by the example of a Roman soldier, a newly converted heathen, a gentile proselyte of the gate! For when Jesus heard the answer of the centurion, "he marvelled, and said unto them that followed, Verily I say unto

you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

2. And here we come to consider that peculiar excellence, in the faith of the centurion of Capernaum, which, in the unerring judgment of Him who knew what was in man, thus differenced it from, and raised it above, what was found, by him, among the Jews.

To this end let us review that answer of the Roman worthy, on which our Lord's testimony was grounded. "The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

This reply is commonly interpreted, as betokening the speaker's great humility of mind; which humility was recognized and rewarded by the witness borne in the text.. Our Lord, however, has spoken of it as an exemplification of his faith. The interpretation is, at best, imperfect; and should be applied with caution, as otherwise it may involve a confusion of terms. Faith is one thing: humility distinctly another. Nor should commentators

lightly destroy the distinction, by dwelling on the centurion's meekness, where Christ recompenses him for his faith. It has, indeed, been too much the practice thus to confound together, in Holy Scripture, terms the most distinct and discriminative. Yet there is no one canon of scriptural interpretation sounder or surer, than that which has for its basis this principle of common sense; that a confusion of terms is nowhere to be met with in the oracles of God.

But to pursue the present subject: it is with the faith of the centurion, and with this alone, that we are properly concerned. And my present duty mainly is, to deduce, from the tenor of his address to Christ, the superior character of his faith, and to place that character before you.

And, here, his exemplary humility rightly comes in, to illustrate the growth and progress of that principle of faith, to which it would seem originally to have given birth. The native meekness of this good man has been usually and well elucidated, from his relative situation in life. He was a Roman citizen, and a Roman soldier; and, in both capacities, held a rank in the province of Judæa, which claimed, and was sure to command, public consideration and respect. In these circumstances, he not only declined to unite with

his haughty countrymen, in their proverbial contempt of the provincials, and especially of the Jewish nation, but carried himself, among the latter, with unaffected courtesy and kindness. This fact is obvious, from the interest manifested by the Jewish elders, who waited on our Lord in his behalf. A growing faith was the offspring and the recompense of this spirit of meekness. From a friend of the Jews, he became a favourer of the Jews' religion, as is apparent from the testimony of those elders, "for he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue." Thus gradually led onward, by the spirit of faith, from a heathen he became a proselyte; and, on receiving further light, from a proselyte, he shewed himself ready to become a Christian. The distinguishing point of his character is now no longer the virtue of humility, but the gift of faith. And this is our Lord's judgment. If he tacitly approves and commends the modesty of the centurion, it is because his modesty in declining to receive him, sprang from the intuitive discernment of faith: for it were easy to shew that it was not so much any sense of his individual unworthiness, but his conscious perception *who* He the Son of Man was, that caused him first to approach the blessed Jesus through the intervention of others, and further

to deprecate so earnestly, the gracious condescension of our Lord towards his servants, when "Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him."

In estimating the character of a faith rendered so remarkable by the witness of the text, various particulars in it have been noticed to show, that he of whom Christ thus spake, was worthy of the tribute. The chief, and certainly an important one, lies in the consideration, that the centurion of Capernaum alone, of all with whom our Lord had to do, manifested belief in his power to heal at a distance. The ground of our Lord's testimony, however, can hardly be laid in this circumstance, when it is considered that a faith nearly akin to this, had been already discovered by an inhabitant of the same city; and that the centurion had before his eyes, in the case of the Jewish nobleman "whose son lay sick at Capernaum," a living example of Christ's power so to heal. However, therefore, this circumstance may stand as evidence of the liveliness, it cannot be accepted in proof of the peculiarity of his faith. In a word, it was not his conviction, thus founded on fact and experience, of our Lord's power to do this, but his estimate of the source and character of that power, that must have entered into the recorded appreciation now before

us — “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

The true measure of this faith is to be sought in the centurion’s confession, for so we must entitle his address to our blessed Lord; which confession, I apprehend, amounts to this:—the recognition and acknowledgment, in the person of the man Christ Jesus, of omnipotent virtue; and this not delegated, but springing from a divine nature.

Our first proof of this important fact is contained in those significant words, “Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.” Thus it was that Scripture itself, and the faithful in all ages, spake, when they would express the immediate action of THE MAJESTY OF HEAVEN. The earliest lesson taught and learnt in the written word was this, that “by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth.” Or, as the Psalmist elsewhere has it, “He spake, and it was made: He commanded, and it stood fast.” Which passages are only indexes to numerous similar passages, to be found from Moses, even to the last of the prophets. With these Scriptures of the Old Testament, the Centurion of Capernaum, as a lover and observer of the Jews’ religion, was

unquestionably familiar. He must have known, both the application of this language, in token of honour and worship, to Almighty God, and the exclusiveness of this application. When, therefore, this man, a proselyte to Judaism, addressed himself to Christ in this very style,—when he called upon Jesus to “speak the word only, and his servant should be healed,”—either he was guilty, knowingly and wilfully, of blasphemy against the most High, or his purpose was to hail our Lord in the language of a living faith, as “God over all, blessed for ever.” Our Lord’s gracious and significant reply certifies the alternative adopted; and abundantly confirms the inference suggested by the address of the believing Roman — “Speak the word only, Lord, and my servant shall be healed.”

The confession made in these few words, thus vouched and verified by the eternal Truth himself, is certainly fuller and more clear than we find elsewhere recorded. It is not, however, altogether without parallel in Israel. The answer of the good and guileless Nathanael, already noticed, indicates perception of our Lord’s divine nature; the declaration of the believing leper, related in the very chapter whence the subject before us is derived,—“Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make

me clean," gives unequivocal token of a corresponding faith entertained; while the conduct of the Jewish nobleman, at an earlier period, in this very city of Capernaum, where his only son lay sick and at the point to die, irrefragably proves the existence in Israel of the persuasion, that Christ, by the virtue of his word no less than of his touch, had power to heal. The Centurion's expression, therefore, of belief in this power, taken singly, would seem hardly sufficient to entitle him to that exclusive pre-eminence, which our Lord in the text assigns him.

But there remains a further and fuller proof of his affiance in Christ's omnipotence, which, rightly understood, impresses upon his faith a character undoubtedly more excellent, than anything made known to us, by the Gospel history, concerning the faith of Israel.

This second proof is contained in the ensuing part of his address: in which, perfecting his recognition of the divine nature of the blessed Jesus, he, with exemplary humility, deprecates the visit, to such as him, of so heavenly a guest; the reason of which procedure he assigns as follows:— "For I am a man under authority*, having soldiers

* It is specially observable, that in describing himself as "a man under authority," the Centurion here contradistinguishes

under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." And then immediately comes the memorable witness of the text — "When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said unto them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

I allow we are told by some commentators, that, in the place just cited, the Centurion meant only to illustrate Christ's power over the disease; and that, in the persons of his own soldiers and servants he personified, as it were, the diseases of the sick, which were ready to depart at the bidding of Jesus, as were those attendants to move in obedience to his own command. A gloss more forced or frigid than this, it is scarcely possible to suppose: I must add, also, more at variance with the analogies of Scripture and good sense. But it is remote indeed from the true interpretation.

For what is the plain and obvious analogy suggested by the language in question? Is it not, that, as this Centurion could himself, in the character of a Roman officer, cause his will to be himself from our Lord, whom he hereby significantly recognizes as one *not* "under authority;" in other words, as *self-acting* and *supreme*. For this remark, the author is indebted to his late excellent friend, the Rev. Henry Handley Norris.

executed, without personal interference, by the agency of those under his authority, — much more could so divine and heavenly a person delegate *His* supreme power to agents and ministers, of a higher order, arrayed under His command.

But to estimate the Centurion's thoughts and reasoning in this place, it will be desirable to consider more particularly his probable training in the doctrine of the Jews. In his intercourse with this nation, which we are told he loved, and in whose religion he was plainly interested — for he had built them a synagogue or house of public worship; a people daily conversant with the law and prophets, and with whom the faith of their fathers was still constant matter of discourse — not only would he learn much concerning the true God, but also concerning the existence and agency, in this lower world, of those angels and messengers of Jehovah, whom He sent forth, at will, to do his errands upon earth, and to minister unto those that should be heirs of salvation. The subject was the more likely to engage the attention of a proselyte, from its having been long matter of controversy among the Jews themselves, as the great touchstone of heresy, and test of orthodox belief. Respecting these ministering angels and spirits, a proselyte, of the Centurion's temper, would be

sure to derive special instruction from the conversation of the Pharisees, who firmly believed in both; and who had additional incitement to publish and inculcate their belief in the doctrine, from the opposition made to it, by the infidel and rival sect of the Sadducees, who as strenuously denied it. Between these contending parties, as our experience of life teaches us, the true doctrine would but the more certainly and clearly come to light; while one situated like this good and wise inquirer, was placed precisely in the circumstances most likely to insure its being practically imbibed and retained. When once, therefore, he discerned the character of Christ Jesus, and *who* it was that said unto him, "I will come and heal him," he appears inwardly to have acknowledged, in this Divine person, the ruler of the hosts of heaven; and as the first impulse of his faithful spirit had been to confess his own unworthiness to receive under his roof so heavenly a guest, so the next is, to implore of the Immanuel, that he would graciously condescend to exercise his inherent sovereignty over the angelic bands, and to save his servant by delegated power.

Here, then, is the scope and purport of his address, "Lord, speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. The ministers of mercy

wait on thy supreme command. Already have I seen and known its omnipotence, in the cure recently wrought, at thy bidding, by these unseen intelligences, in this very city. Act then, in thy sphere of dominion, even as I am wont to do in my lesser rule. For I, also, as well as thou, am in authority, having soldiers under me. And if one so little as I am, can, by my word, cause my commands to be executed by these my servants, without being personally present, — much more, Lord, thou, having under thy sovereign control the angels and messengers of heaven — those benign and blessed spirits who, I know and believe, encompass about on every side the least of thy faithful servants, and continually watch over them for good—canst, by thy word, cause thy will to be performed, without troubling thyself to go, and canst bid my servant live.”

It remains to consider the practical uses and application of the subject.

1. And first, we may learn, hence, the value of a subdued and lowly temper of mind ; and of not attaching an undue magnitude and importance, to the accidental circumstances, or advantages of life. Had this Roman officer done so, as might well have happened, he would not have concerned himself with the Jews, or their religion, and the

truth as it was in Jesus Christ must have remained unknown to him. Are we, who call ourselves Christians, necessarily safe from a similar danger and temptation? Should we not fear, my brethren, lest by indulgence in a spirit of pride, of presumption, and vain self-conceit, in the enjoyment of the temporal blessings or advantages, above others, with which a gracious Providence may have favoured us, we may provoke our God to jealousy, and our glorified Redeemer may refuse to become known to and in our hearts? Let us be guarded and watchful against this peril; and that we may be so, let us especially observe and imitate, in this particular of humility, the conduct of the Centurion of Capernaum, so shall our humbleness of mind, like his, be rewarded with an answerable increase of faith.

2. Another, and more direct lesson, deducible from this place of Scripture, is, the exceeding great benefit of "faith in God" — a faith, not merely embraced by the understanding, but cherished in the heart, and daily and hourly exercised and exemplified in the life and conversation. Such was this Centurion's faith. He believed God, and trusted in him; and in virtue of this unfeigned belief and affiance, he acquired a tact and perception in things spiritual, which qualified him to discern

what, of a truth, came from God. When, therefore, Christ Jesus presented himself in Capernaum, he knew the Eternal Son, by the Eternal Father's likeness; and having known, he promptly and willingly rendered him "the honour due unto his name." After this example, we also should keep the lamp of faith trimmed, and the light of faith burning, that we also may be always ready, according to our better lights, and superior opportunities, to know and to acknowledge the presence of God, of Christ, of the spirit of holiness and truth, whether hiding its gracious influxes in the secret chambers of our hearts, or manifesting forth its glory in the ordinary events of life, and in providential dealings and visitations in the world around us. *He* will stand little in need of outward signs and wonders to excite and raise his faith, who studies to preserve and cherish it, by meditation on what thus passes within, and by observation of what is thus declared abroad of the counsel of God concerning him. He will learn to recognize the works of God, by their likeness to the great original; and to know of each deed, word, and thought, as well as doctrine, whether it be of God, by doing himself, constantly and faithfully, the will of his Heavenly Father.

Lastly: from this passage of the Gospel History,

we should learn the use and value of an enlarged and comprehensive faith; — a faith, not resting in a general belief in God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; — but, embracing, in their several subordinate relations, all the objects of faith held forth to us in Holy Scripture. The belief of the Centurion of Capernaum appears to have been of this character. He had made himself practically conversant, not only with the faith and worship of the true God, but also with the Jewish doctrine concerning the ministry of angels. The Word of God, and the history of the chosen people, had jointly taught him this important truth — “that millions of spiritual beings walk the earth,” ready to do the errands, and execute the will, of our Father which is in heaven. Nor was his unfeigned confession of the greater, with him a reason or excuse for neglecting this lesser, yet highly useful and edifying article of faith. And he was recompensed accordingly — both in the homage which he was thereby enabled duly to render unto the Son of God, and by the gracious return made in the words of the text, — “When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said unto them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

My brethren, let us also be like-minded. Let

us not rest contented in cold generalities, nor curtail the measure of Scriptural truth. Let us, on the contrary, habitually recall to mind those parts of Holy Scripture, which set before us the appointed ministration of the blessed saints and angels among men; and make our consciousness, thus grounded on the assurances of God's word, of the continual presence and inspection of such a host of witnesses, a constant motive and incitement to "unwearied continuance in well-doing." "Take heed," says our blessed Lord, "that ye offend not one of these little ones, for their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." And if these heavenly visitants thus look down upon our world for judgment, much more will they look down for mercy. Animated by the reflection, let us open and raise the eyes of our understanding towards such contemplations. So shall the heavenly world, and its blessed inhabitants, as we draw nearer to the goal, unfold themselves more and more distinctly to our view; enlightening our minds with fresh revelations of wisdom from above, and enlivening our hearts with new foretastes of the future glory. So shall we be taught, of the Spirit of God, what of a truth it is — to "laud and magnify His glorious name with angels, and archangels, and with all the company of heaven."

So, finally, shall we best prepare and qualify ourselves, our mortal course finished, and our earthly labours done, to converse with those blessed and glorious beings, who, having watched over and befriended us, in time, shall, if only we continue faithful unto death, be our companions, in God's presence, through the day of eternity.

SERMON XI.

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

1 TIMOTHY, iii. 16.

“ Great is the mystery of godliness.”

THE divine truth, revealed, at once, and hidden, in these words (which, whatever, by examination of their context, they shall be found to convey, self-evidently include the whole character and design of the Christian dispensation) is elsewhere, and repeatedly, expressed, by Saint Paul, under the same image of A MYSTERY. Thus, in one passage, we read of it as “the mystery of Christ;” in another, as “the mystery of God;” in a third, as “the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;” and, in a fourth, as “the mystery of the Gospel.” Does the Apostle describe what he emphatically styles “his Gospel, and the preaching of Christ?” — it is described as “the revelation of the mystery.” Does he define the office and ministry of his apostleship? — the definition is, “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery.”

But while, in other epistles, and pre-eminently in those to the Romans and the Ephesians, he explains "this mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God," comprehensively of the calling and coming in of the Gentiles, and the final union of all things in heaven and earth in one, under the one head, even Christ Jesus, — in the epistle whence the text is taken, and in it alone, the Apostle enters into a detailed exposition of "the great mystery of Godliness." In recording such exposition, without controversy he designed to invite to its devout contemplation, not his beloved son Timothy only, but the whole Church of Christ, throughout the world, to the end of time.

Let us, then, my brethren, at this blessed season of the Christian year, in which, by the ascension of the Lord Jesus into heaven, and the consequent descent of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, upon earth, the work of man's redemption, wrought upon the Cross, received its full accomplishment, became spiritually operative, and savingly efficacious, — let us, at this "time of Pentecost," consider the text in its connection with the context; and follow humbly in the footsteps of the great Apostle, while he leads us from stage to stage of "the mystery of Godliness," from its commencement on earth to its consummation in heaven.

“Without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

In considering this passage, attention seems, from the very construction, in the first place, to be invited to the examination of its order and connection. From this examination it will appear, that, while a strict connection of the parts is preserved throughout, the first head corresponding with the fourth, the second with the fifth, and the third with the sixth of the series, — at the same time, the six heads into which Saint Paul here resolves the mystery of Godliness, are to be further regarded as themselves divided into two great branches: three of the terms relating to the mystery of redemption, as respects, more immediately, the office and person of the Messiah; and three relating to the same divine mystery, as seen in its results, in the operations continually working within His Church “the work of God,” and all flowing, as from the one fountain-head, from the office and person of Messiah.

“God, manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels,” is to be referred, I conceive, to the former; “God, preached unto the Gentiles,

believed on in the world, received up into glory," to the latter, of these branches.

This two-fold division, if established as just, *must* plainly be essential to any right understanding of a text, from its structure as difficult, as in its nature it is important; and whose very difficulty renders it only the more important that it be rightly understood. Again, if the two-fold division in question be itself correct, — the heads of the first part, relating to the mystery of Godliness as it respects the person and office of Immanuel, or "God manifest in the flesh," may justly be expected to agree with the heads of the second part, which are understood to relate, especially, to the operations and results of the Incarnation.

This agreement between the parts of the general division, I am prepared to show, is not only distinctly observable, but most accurately marked out, in the structure of Saint Paul's sentence, head answering to head in order throughout.

In this view, the entire passage may be taken as though it ran thus: "God was manifest in the flesh, and preached unto the Gentiles; justified in the spirit, and believed on in the world; seen of angels, and received up into glory." The text, therefore, with reference to its just interpretation,

must be considered as three-fold: the heads of the second part differing from the heads of the first part, only as results differ from the causes which produce them.

Let us now test the soundness of this three-fold subdivision, by comparison of Scripture with Scripture; of the mystery of Godliness, as set before us in this passage of 1 Timothy, with a passage, similarly subdivided, from the Gospel of Saint John. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," was the saying of "God our Saviour," the Lord Jesus Christ himself, in his own account of his office and ministry to the Apostle Saint Thomas. I proceed to show that, in this divine saying, we have before us the key to our interpretation of the text: its three members corresponding in order and significance with those of the passage under consideration, in its triple distribution last spoken of. Christ as "the way," is "God manifest in the flesh, and preached unto the Gentiles." Christ as "the truth," is "God, justified in the Spirit, and believed on in the world." Christ as "the life," is "God, seen of angels, and received up into glory."

1. As "the way," Christ is "God, manifest in the flesh." This truth, we prove shortly and plainly from the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Having

therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living *way*, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his *flesh*." Now, as *the way* into the holiest was through *his flesh*, it inevitably follows, that it is as "God manifest in the flesh" that Christ Jesus is "the way;" in other words, as God made man, born, living, teaching, conversing, suffering, dying, and rising from the dead; "by his death destroying death, and by his rising to life again, restoring to us everlasting life."

There is a wonderful propriety in all Scripture imagery. There is a Divine appropriateness in the imagery of our blessed Lord. If we follow only the guidance of his images and allusions, whether taken at large from the course of nature, or from the circumstances of civil or social life, we are sure to interpret aright. A *way*, however, in itself plain and perfect, cannot, it is obvious, be of any avail, either so long as its existence is unknown to them for whose use it was provided, or so long as those for whose use it was provided are unprepared, unwilling, or unable to enter on it, or to walk therein. Thus, were a way constructed for subjects by their earthly Prince, the first requisite in order to its usefulness plainly

is, that its existence be made known. And so of the King's highway of which we speak, the way that leadeth to eternal life, in a sense infinitely higher it is true, the first requisite is, that mankind be apprized of its existence. To the Jew, indeed, prepared by Moses and the Prophets, and the promise made of God unto the fathers, it was, or should have been, comparatively speaking, little needful to point out or proclaim this way. But to the benighted Gentile world, whose calling forms a leading part of the "mystery of godliness," "This is the way, walk ye in it," would be any thing rather than a needless invitation. If the way of life needed to be proclaimed, and the entrance on it to be pointed out, to the enlightened Israelites, what call, what invitation, could be accounted more than requisite for those, "who sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death?" in darkness, unable to discern the way, or grope a passage to its entrance; in the shadow of death, as powerless to walk therein. Christ "the way," then, being the first step in the mystery of godliness, that, naturally next in order, is Christ, as "the way," proclaimed to these benighted wanderers. A consideration this, which indicates, at once, and establishes the designed connection, in our text, between "God manifest in the

flesh," the head of its first division, and "God preached unto the Gentiles," the head of its second.

A *way*, however, may be constructed, may be proclaimed, may become known, yet none be found willing to seek an entrance, or worthy, were they willing, to walk therein. And so of that great highway, which alone leadeth to eternal life, what could it have availed that Christ Jesus, as "the way," was "manifested in the flesh," and "preached unto the Gentiles," if the mystery of his incarnation concealed within it no further mystery? if the preaching of this doctrine carried with it no power to enliven the understanding, to move the will, and to influence the actions through the heart? Therefore it is that Saint Paul acquaints us, in the place of his Epistle to the Hebrews already cited, that Christ incarnate is not a "new," only, but, also, "a *living way*." A living way, in the first sense of the expression, because he is "the truth:" a living way, in its highest sense, as he is "the life."

In the first place, Christ incarnate, as "the truth," is a living way, because, as "the truth," he is not only "God manifest in the flesh, and preached unto the Gentiles," but "God justified in the Spirit, and believed on in the world." That this is so, very

plainly appears from a passage in Saint John's gospel : " When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak. He shall glorify me ; *for he shall receive of mine*, and shall show it unto you." The Spirit, we here observe, is denominated " the Spirit of truth." His office is to guide the Church " into all truth ;" yet that whereunto he guides is not his own ; for, saith our blessed Lord, " He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Again we read, " And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." It is, consequently, as " the truth," that Christ is " God justified in the Spirit."

" Justified in the Spirit." In order adequately to apprehend this part of the mystery of godliness (a part to the contemplation of which this season of Pentecost more specially invites us), we must recall to mind what is the office, and what have been the operations, of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, within the Church of God. The office of the Spirit, as defined by Christ himself, is " to guide his Church into all truth." To this end, and to the intent that, in the end, that Church may become co-extensive with God's world, the operations of the Holy Spirit, from his first coming as at this

time, to the days, my brethren, in which we live, have been uniformly directed, on the one hand, to advance, by the almighty power of his grace, real Christians "in righteousness and true holiness;" on the other hand, to bring, by the same divine power, the children of this world within the invisible church. In this latter operation, especially, the connection, in the text, between Christ as "God justified in the Spirit," and Christ as "God believed on in the world," becomes most plain and clear.

But there is a marked advance in the terms of this part of the mystery, compared with the part which preceded it, to which I would now invite attention. Under the first head, we learn only that Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, was preached unto the Gentiles. But the preaching might have been in vain; and if in vain, where then should we seek for a result in any way worthy of the mystery of the Incarnation? Such might be the objection raised, and the inquiry made, had the Apostle rested here. The next stage, however, in his ascending scale of the mystery of godliness, proves triumphantly, that the preaching could not be in vain, because here are provided means divinely fitted for the attainment of the great end of all Christian preaching, the salvation of the souls of

men. By the agency of the Spirit of God, of holiness, and of power, the preaching of the Word is rendered effectual to salvation, and Christ, as "God justified by the Spirit, *is* believed on in the world."

We have thus far traced the mystery of godliness, through the Church of the Messiah on earth; we are now called to pursue the same divine mystery, within the kingdom of the Messiah in heaven. The last stage in the Apostle's summary is, Christ, as "God, seen of angels, and received up into glory." What influence the mystery of Christianity may have on the progress or perfecting of the inhabitants of other worlds, it is not for man to conjecture or pronounce. In the concluding words of the text, however, something pregnant with mysterious meaning may be inferred from one significant circumstance—the place in which they stand.

Those most conversant with the writings of Saint Paul will be least disposed to regard as undesigned, any departure, in his composition, from the apparent order of the sense. In the text, however, the ASCENSION, which, in order of time, preceded the descent of the Holy Ghost, the preaching to the Gentiles, and the believing of the world, is disposed, notwithstanding, as the close and climax of the entire series. In so disposing it, we may be well assured, the order of time will be found to

have been sacrificed, only to the higher consideration of the order of the sense.

That Christ, as "God seen of angels," is significant of some mysterious connection between his Church on earth and his kingdom in heaven, is rendered undeniable by a corresponding passage in Saint Paul's epistle to the Ephesians; a place which puts the Apostle's seal upon the order here adopted, in the interpretation of the present text: "Unto me (saith he) is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men know what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto *the principalities and powers in heavenly places* might be known by *the Church* the manifold wisdom of God." Here we meet, in other words, the substance of the text; and here, as there, the preaching to the Gentiles of God manifest in the flesh, and the believing of the world on God justified in the Spirit, are treated of, not only as connected in some way with the mystery of godliness in other and higher regions, but as accomplished with THE INTENT of disclosing, by the Church, to angelic natures, "the manifold wisdom of God."

That the mystery of our Lord's ascension into

heaven, and consequent manifestation of himself *as the Messiah* to his holy angels, carries within it something beyond the glorious event itself, is consequently clearly revealed. What that something is, we will now, in conclusion, gather from Saint John's gospel. "I go (saith our Lord) to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Again, "A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again a little while, and ye shall see me, *because I go to the Father.*" The return, and the seeing of him, of which our Lord, in these words, gives the promise, he manifestly promises as *consequent* upon his being "received up into glory." But from the day of the ascension, he showed himself no more visibly to these disciples. His return and manifestation, therefore, could be intended only in that spiritual sense, in which Christ is with his Church and people, even unto the end of the world. In other words, the promise is, that, in virtue of his then going to the Father, he would come again in the power of the Holy Ghost, and dwell in his Church and people by love: that is to say, that he would be "*their life*;" for Saint John bears this record,—“He that hath the Son hath life;” and this character of Christ Jesus as “the life” of his

Church, Saint Paul gives, in his Epistle to the Colossians, as a truth deducible from the consummation of the mystery of godliness in the text,—even the receiving up of God the Saviour into glory: “If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” “Ye see your calling, brethren.” May God, for Christ’s sake, give us grace “to make that calling and election sure.”

SERMON XII.

FAITH AND WORKS.

SAINT JAMES, i. 27.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

IN order rightly to understand and interpret this passage, we should take into account the object of the General Epistle of Saint James.

The Epistle of Saint James was obviously written with this chief end, — to correct false notions respecting true religion; to clear Christianity from very fatal mistakes as to its design and character, which, even in that early age, had crept into the churches. It is well known that, even in the apostolic age, distinctions tending to sever doctrines from practice, to draw a line of separation between the principles of religion and the conduct of life, were largely prevalent. In other words, that the controversy concerning faith and works, which, in after times, divided and distracted Chris-

tendom, already engaged the thoughts of the disciples, and disturbed or threatened the peace of the Church. For the origin of this controversy, we should be obliged to go higher than the rise of Christianity. For the immediate occasion of its growth among the primitive Christians, we are taught to refer, as most who hear me know, to the teaching, and especially to the written teaching, of Saint Paul. The Epistles of this great Apostle confessedly abound with depths and obscurities; with obscurities and depths, which have been ignorantly ascribed to the difficulty of the style, but which grow, in fact, out of the intrinsic difficulty of his subjects. By the best judges it is now wholly conceded, that the writings of Saint Paul discover a perfect mastery of style, both in the choice of expressions, the structure of the sentences, and the order and arrangement of the subjects. But the subjects, as I have already noticed, were themselves difficult, relating much to dark and abstract points, and requiring, consequently, long and logical trains of reasoning. The manner of the Apostle, according to the practice of the best writers, varied with the matter he had in hand. And, thus, the supposed defects of his style constitute in truth its great excellence; arising as they do simply from the style being .

suited to the subject. In the infancy of our holy religion it was naturally to be expected, that writings of this severe character would give birth to manifold errors and misconceptions among that class of disciples (a class but too prevalent and conspicuous in subsequent ages of the church), who would undertake to *interpret*, before they had qualified themselves to understand, the great truths of the Gospel. Accordingly, Saint Peter, in his second General Epistle, has a lively description of the shipwreck made by those, in his day, who failing themselves to apprehend, had yet presumed to misinterpret, the Epistles of his beloved brother Paul, "in which," observes this holy Apostle, "are some things hard to be understood; which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do, also, the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction."

The General Epistle of Saint James was evidently framed, more fully to meet the difficulties thus avowedly inherent in Saint Paul's writings; and to do away those ill effects resulting from their perversion, which are here only indicated by Saint Peter. Throughout his expositions of gospel truth, and especially in his statements of the two-fold doctrine of *faith* and *works*, it was a main object with the Apostle of the Gentiles, to purify

Christianity from the infection of Jewish errors. To this point of fact we must give constant heed, if we would rightly understand and interpret the Catholic Epistle of Saint James. The doctrine of the Jews concerning good works or legal righteousness, was shortly and simply this, — that the law of God being once made known to man, man was, thenceforward, sufficient to work out his own salvation; capable, that is, by his own strength, to fulfil all righteousness, and perfectly to accomplish the will and word of God. Against this presumptuous creed, which went to undermine the very groundwork of the Gospel,—which wholly excluded the idea of Divine influences, made the doctrine of grace a dead letter, and the Holy Spirit an empty name,—the Apostle Saint Paul bent the whole energies of his wisdom and his zeal. He taught, accordingly, that, of his own strength, man could do no good thing; that the righteousness of the law is nothing worth; that no other righteousness can profit or avail, save that which springeth from faith only. Resting here his foundation, the Apostle goes on to build up his readers in those higher principles of Christianity, which naturally arise out of this good beginning; to convince them that the only greatness of the Christian consists in his humility; that our best strength lies in the con-

sciousness of our weakness; since, then, the weakness of man shall be strengthened by the almighty power of God. Whence, on the one hand, he enforces maxims of holy jealousy, vigilance, and self-distrust; while, on the other, he impresses upon the minds of the disciples a lively sense of the necessity of faith, and the prevailing efficacy of prayer. A theology thus sound and simple in the pages of Saint Paul, in the hands of some among the disciples, however, became quickly perverted into a source of new and opposite errors. At once wholly losing sight of the origin of this controversy, and its strict relation to Jewish prejudices and opinions, men of less practical habits, or of busy and speculative minds, presently took up the matter in a new light, and begun to separate and distinguish, not between Legal and Gospel righteousness, not, that is, between the righteousness which is of the law, and that which springeth from faith, but between faith on the one hand, and practice on the other. And thus, by the waywardness of man, was put asunder, what the wisdom of God had joined together.

The tendency of such a distinction is but too plain; and where permitted only to flow out into its natural consequences, this distinction is one subversive equally of morality and religion. To

correct abuses already arisen from this fatal misconstruction of Saint Paul's doctrine, was, as I before intimated, the object of the Catholic Epistle whence the text is derived. In refutation of those unlearned and unstable comments, which were framed on a partial view of Saint Paul's writings, and which went to substitute a notional and dogmatic creed for pure and practical Christianity, Saint James applied himself to discuss, at large, the twofold doctrine of the Gospel concerning faith and works; to demonstrate that good works were the necessary fruit and touchstone of a sound faith, and that it was impossible to oppose to each other, as rival principles, principles which were divinely and indissolubly linked together. As, however, his argument lay chiefly with those, who claimed an imaginary exclusiveness of operation for the principle of faith, the holy Apostle, through this letter, mainly aims to restore to its due place and prominence the depreciated principle of good works. He teaches, therefore, that if a man have not works, what such an one is pleased to term faith cannot save him; that an approved faith can manifest itself only by good works; that, even as the body without the spirit is "dead, so faith without works is dead also."

To this plain and pointed declaration of the true

doctrine, the sacred writer leads up in the practical exhortations of the first chapter of his Epistle. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," a topic happily illustrated by the imagery of the succeeding verses; which prefatory exhortation he brings to a close in the words of the text, with this summary definition of personal Christianity, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

It is well known that, in their zeal for upholding what is doctrinal in Christianity, interpreters have been found sufficiently rash to bring into question the theology of this Epistle of Saint James.

From the tenor of the passages just recited, and especially from the definition of true religion in the text, these men have judged it to be the writer's object, to magnify works to the injury, or rather to the doing away, of faith. And, in one memorable instance, the wildness of paradox adventured so far as to pronounce this Catholic Epistle "an epistle of straw." A little attention to the Apostle's object, would have corrected, to say no more, so extravagant a judgment. It would have been seen, that, throughout their apparently rival statements, Saint James and Saint Paul went on the same

principle, and walked by the same rule;—that Saint Paul magnified faith, because he wrote against the false doctrine of the Jews concerning human merit; that Saint James magnified works, because he wrote against those who deduced an opposite false doctrine, by misconstruction, from Saint Paul. It would have been seen, further, that, in the teaching of both Apostles, faith and works, belief and practice, the doctrines, in a word, and the duties of the gospel, went equally and invariably together.

To apply the preceding remarks to the definition which Saint James has given of true religion in the text;—we find the Apostle here, apparently, resolving the whole of religion into the conduct of life,—into the fulfilment of our individual, and our social duties.

Does the sacred penman hereby intend to exclude from his reckoning the great Christian principle of faith, and to build up anew the Jewish doctrine of human merit? Far otherwise. In a passage immediately preceding the text, he makes an effectual provision against such an imputation; giving a rule which lies necessarily at the foundation of all that is to follow, and which guards every position, and limits every precept, of his letter. “Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every

good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and descendeth from the Father of lights." As though he would say, Be not misled by the practical character of my letter,—by its commendation and enforcement of the duties of religion,—to assume or arrogate aught unto yourselves, as of yourselves. I now write to warn you against a faith without fruit; beware, on your part, that you fall not into the opposite error, that you put not your trust in fruit without faith. Call to mind rather the former teaching, that without faith you can do nothing, that you have nothing which you have not received; that for vain boasting, consequently, there is no room, since our sufficiency is of God. "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and descendeth from the Father of lights."

From what has been observed, it is clear that the Apostle, by defining religion in these practical terms, and resolving the sum of Christianity into the conduct of life, meant no exclusion or disparagement of that foundation of all gospel truth and righteousness, the first principle of faith: that faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and affiance, for every good word and work, on the influences and inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, formed with Saint James, as with Saint Paul, both the ground-work

and the corner-stone of the Christian Temple. But his object was, to restore to its due place the principle of good works; and he puts accordingly in the text, by a familiar figure, part for the whole,—the practical results for the entire of true religion.

The passage before us, however, perhaps conveys more than is commonly ascribed to it; for it appears clearly to indicate a reciprocal relation between faith and works; that if good works, properly so termed, must primarily flow from a living faith,—faith itself, on the other hand, will be strengthened and improved by the practice of good works; that, while it is true religion only that can give birth to sound morality, sound morality, in its turn, will deepen true religion.

It only requires that we hold fixedly in our view, what was never absent from the heaven-taught view of the Apostle, that faith is the foundation, and the grace of God the planter, of all right and Christian practice, and we shall presently see and experience this important lesson deducible from the text,—that the practice of our individual and social duties, if carried on only in simplicity of intention, cannot fail to strengthen the principle of religion in the heart. Indeed the tendency of mankind to place reliance in their own strength, once duly repressed and regulated, by the refer-

ence of every thing good and perfect unto God, the lesson suggested to us by the text is in a great degree read to us, from the book of human nature, and human life.

For to consider here only the social duties: What is the natural tendency of liberal and beneficent actions? Is it not to soften and expand the heart? to make the bountiful man rejoice in his own bounty, not so much in that it raises him with himself, but that it quickens the social principle within him, and refreshes and invigorates his love towards his fellows? But what preparation, again, in itself more favourable to the contemplation of God, to the admission of divine truth, to the entertainment of religion, than that of a heart thus melted down and expanded into kindness towards its fellow-creatures? In such a frame of feeling, there is a suspension of the unsocial passions and affections, and the mind is consequently tempered to receive impressions only of the better and happier kind. What we bestow on the creature, naturally awakens the sense and remembrance of what we owe to the Creator: in the exercise of bounty towards man, we are necessarily reminded of the bountifulness of God; and human thus leads upwards to the Divine love.

But this inclination of the thoughts upwards,

which has its rise from deeds of beneficence and brotherly love, is still further aided if the objects themselves, on which we exercise our beneficence, claim, not interest only, but sympathy and compassion: if they are weak and helpless, and unbefriended save by the merciful alone. The view of such objects instinctively bears us into the Divine presence, and brings Him before our eyes, who is the Father of the fatherless, and Friend of the friendless, the Helper of the poor destitute, and the Judge of the widow.

If, in addition to these particulars, we are led onward to reflect that the subjects to whom we extend our compassionate care are the victims, not only of penury and disappointment, but of suffering and sorrow; that they are oppressed by a burthen which allows no earthly alleviation, and borne down by griefs which no human comforter can assuage; how, then, must not God and religion become present to our view! religion, which alone opens to sorrowing and suffering humanity a hope above hope, a solace beyond the grave, a sure refuge in that undiscovered land, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest! God, who only can justly compassionate human sufferings, and adequately sympathize with human sorrows!

If, to the entire of these considerations, we add that blessed certainty which Christianity imparts (which meets at once, and outgoes every inborn anticipation of the human heart), as to the compassionate lovingkindness and sympathy of our God; if we behold that God, in the person and character of Him, who, in his own sacred form, bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, Christ the Immanuel, God with us; then are we irresistibly borne upwards, from the practice of the social duties, to the principle of true religion; then, if not before, we are thoroughly instructed to understand and interpret the apostolic canon of Saint James, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

Such being, according to the infallible teaching of an apostle, the reciprocal operation of the two-fold principle of faith and works, our plain duty is, so to study and apply what God hath thus joined together, that the effects of this union may be felt in our hearts, shine out in our conversation, and bring forth in us fruit unto everlasting life. To this end, we should hold ever in mind the opposite errors of which it behoveth us to beware, namely, on the one hand, a presumptuous trust in any thing that we do; on the other, an unauthorized

reliance on what is done for us by Christ: there is equal and imminent danger in these extremes, to stand clear of which we must take the middle course, in which alone the path of safety lies; in a word, we must turn from what is done *by* us, and what is done *for* us, to what is done *in* us, by the grace of God. This course is pointed out to us equally by Saint James and by Saint Paul; but would we pursue it wisely, we must enter on it, under the joint guidance of both Apostles. Saint James insists more largely upon works, Saint Paul more largely upon faith: what is the obvious, the only safe inference? Plainly, that he who predominantly inclines to the apostolic doctrine of faith, as taught by Saint Paul; should regulate his bias by reference to the apostolic doctrine of works, as delivered by Saint James; while he whose natural bent of mind congenializes more with the latter, should preserve the balance, by habitual recurrence to the teaching of the former Apostle. Thus, in the teaching of these kindred lights, shall we come to find, instead of two discordant parts, one harmonious whole; thus shall we be preserved from the equally destructive snares of false humility on the one hand, and unauthorized confidence on the other; thus finally, by the grace of God, and through the influence of His good Spirit,

may we hopefully reach onward to that blessed consummation, when works wrought in faith shall receive their exceeding great reward; when that faith which hath borne fruit unto righteousness shall reach, as its end, everlasting life.

A
COURSE OF SERMONS
ON THE
LIFE AND MINISTRY OF SAINT PAUL.

SERMON I.

LIFE OF SAINT PAUL PREVIOUS TO HIS CONVERSION.

1 COR. xv. 10.

"But by the grace of God I am what I am : and his grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain ; but I laboured more abundantly than they all : yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

THE Church of England, both in her confession of faith, and throughout her liturgical services, carefully institutes her members in the belief, that, as God upholds this visible world by his providence, in like manner he sustains the spiritual world by his grace. She instructs us to regard Divine grace as the single source of whatever there is of excellence in the practice, or of comfort in the hope, of man ; and teaches that "we do lean only" on its blessed influences, for our first growth, our advancement, and our maturity in a religious life. This lesson of our venerable Establishment, of thus frequent recurrence in her "Book of Common Prayer," is especially commended to our notice in

the services appointed for her two great festivals, that of the Nativity, and that of the Resurrection. In the collect for Christmas-Day, we offer up our supplications to Almighty God, "*that we, being made his children by adoption and grace, may be renewed daily by his Holy Spirit;*" in that for Easter-Day, "*we humbly beseech him that, as by his special grace preventing us, he doth put into our minds good desires, so by his continual help we may bring the same to good effect:*" both which petitions plainly and practically set before us the important doctrine in question under its twofold form, of God's *preventing*, and God's *assisting* grace.

In a doctrine which the Church of England thus uniformly inculcates, we naturally look to discover the groundwork and the chief materials of that building, of which Incarnate Godhead is the cornerstone. Nor, if in this instance we revert from her judgment, and from that of the Catholic Church, whose language she here adopts, to the only more authoritative standard of appeal, shall we be disappointed in our expectation. From the Holy Scriptures we distinctly learn that, by the incarnation of our Blessed Lord (independently of the mysterious efficacy of his death and passion as a sacrifice for sin), a twofold provision was made for the renewal of human nature, debased as it had

become and debilitated by the fall of our first parent. Could precept, simply, and example, have restored to righteousness a fallen world, the world must have been recovered by the heavenly teaching, and the blameless life, of the Blessed Jesus. But, degraded from his first estate of innocence, man, we know, together with his innocence, had made shipwreck, both of his moral strength, and of his religious affections; qualities which once eradicated from his soul, the commands and the example (could this example have been set forth in unveiled majesty before him) even of the glorious God himself must have proved inefficient to work out his restoration. But with "God manifest in the flesh" all things became possible; all difficulty vanished when he appeared; he gave, with his example, the desire to imitate; he bestowed, with his commandments, the ability to obey. In a word, the Immanuel dwelt amongst men, that he might redeem his people, not *from the guilt* only, but *from the power*, also, of sin; that in his sinless life he might instruct, and by his heavenly grace, at the same time, enable the children of men to live holy and undefiled here; and to leave this life happy in themselves, and in perfect peace with God.

This twofold design in the great mystery of godliness is thus briefly but comprehensively ex-

pressed by Saint Paul: “ The grace of God, *which bringeth salvation*, hath appeared unto all men; *teaching us* that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Were it requisite, in support of an article of faith, which the whole volume of both Testaments goes to strengthen and confirm, to adduce specific authority of Scripture, this one passage, assuredly, would suffice to ratify and seal the judgment of our Church. She might wisely labour to inculcate a doctrine, upon the right apprehension of which she has such warrant of God’s holy word, that both the faith and the practice of her children are dependent. She might well desire to impress our minds and hearts with the conviction that we can obtain deliverance from what there is of evil in us only by divine succour; that it is by the grace of God, and by it alone, we can reach onward to “ things just, pure, lovely, and of good report.”

Such being the language and the spirit of the Church of England respecting this most important article of faith, it becomes her members religiously to beware how far they suffer themselves to be deceived into the persuasion that they conform to this

lesson of their venerable instructress, by the bare confession of belief in the doctrine of divine assistance, or that they fulfil her injunctions in this behalf by the mere recognition of dependence on the grace of God. Far otherwise. If we would reap the fruits of her teaching, we must learn to regard this catholic verity, not merely as an object of faith, but as the only ground of our practice; not as a doctrine addressed to the understanding, but as a principle to be cultivated in the heart.

Perhaps the most effectual instruments (under a higher guidance) for carrying into effect within ourselves this growth and cultivation, are to be found in the lessons afforded by the lives of men in whom the fruitfulness of this heavenly doctrine has been most signally exemplified. We are all aware of how intimate a nature the connection is, between a due study of the lives of others, and a just acquaintance with our own hearts. But in duly studying the lives of the pious and the good, we enjoy this further benefit,—that self-acquaintance and self-improvement go indissolubly hand in hand.

In the present, and in the two following discourses, it will be my object to consider the doctrine of grace as exemplified in the life and

ministerial labours of a divinely-chosen individual. We will take for our instruction in righteousness the character of Saint Paul. Let us follow the course of this chief of the Apostles, and bring into a connected view the circumstances of his life. His youth, his manhood, his declining years, are pregnant with warning, encouragement, and wisdom. The characters of the persecutor, the convert, and the Apostle open a large and various field for our contemplation. Let us contemplate this master-spirit under each ; let us learn of him, how far, through the successive stages of his life, he was indebted to restraints or guidance from above : we may thus hereafter return, with more advantage, to consider for ourselves how far we also, in our measure, may have been directed and upheld by the influences of preventing and assisting grace. By the preventing grace of God, I here particularly understand those operations of the Holy Spirit, from which the soul (it may be unconsciously) receives its earliest direction towards God and goodness. By his assisting grace are signified those influences of the same Spirit, by which the faithful are sustained in their after-progress ; by which they are preserved from all evil, and strengthened in all that is good ; in a word, by which they are conducted in safety through the

pilgrimage of this life to the possession of that inheritance which fadeth not away.

In the person of Saint Paul, their united effects are most strikingly, and most instructively, exemplified. In him, we contemplate the once wilful instrument of hardened infidelity, the self-devoted persecutor of the infant Church, brought, by the power of preventing grace, to know and to confess the truth of Christ's religion; brought to own its healing influences in his heart, to glory in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to preach that faith which he had once destroyed. In him, we behold the now zealous minister of a crucified Master, proclaiming throughout the heathen world the glad tidings of great joy; against the pressure of unnumbered dangers, trials, and temptations, maintaining still his righteous course of unexampled labours; and, amidst them all, made conqueror, yea, more than conqueror, through the ready succours of assisting grace. To this twofold operation of the Spirit of God, the holy Apostle himself assigns all the glory of his triumphs: to the former, he wholly attributes his conversion; to the latter, he refers his every hope of final perseverance; and their united effects are explicitly recognized in his memorable confession to the Church of Corinth, in the words

of the text: "By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

In selecting, to illustrate the doctrine of grace, the character and life of the Apostle of the Gentiles, we take up a subject which presents, on its foreground, a division sufficiently obvious and familiar: 1. The history of Saul of Tarsus previous to his conversion; and, 2. that of Saint Paul, the Apostle of Christ Jesus.

In this introductory discourse, I shall limit myself, chiefly, to the former of these periods; and to the more hidden course, consequently, of God's providence and preventing grace, in preparing for himself, and for the future service of his Church, the extraordinary individual whom God had separated, even from his mother's womb, to reveal unto him, after a manner before unexampled, his Eternal Son, that he might preach amongst the heathen the kingdom of Christ Jesus, and make known unto all men "the manifold grace of God."

In the miraculous calling and conversion of Saint Paul is placed before us the most remarkable instance of Divine interposition, in be-

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half of individuals, on record throughout holy writ. This, then, is a case in which it is reasonable to inquire, how far we must consider his conversion as the first expression in his favour of the tender mercies of God; and whether we are to date from the period of this holy Apostle's calling to the ministry of Christ Jesus, the earliest workings of the grace of Christ in his soul. In other words, whether we have just grounds to pronounce the call, in this memorable instance, an arbitrary act of overruling power; or reasons which could warrant us in viewing this conversion as the passive effect of irresistible will. Of the difficulties which are implied in such an inquiry (to omit for the present more direct presumptions) the conduct, under similar circumstances of trial, of men of like passions and prejudices with Saul of Tarsus, will afford, perhaps, the clearest and least hazardous solution. I do not allude, here, to that unparalleled succession of miracles, which our blessed Lord performed during his ministry; and to which he so frequently appealed, as authoritative evidences of his Divine mission. I speak not of the cold, unbending obstinacy, with which his chosen people rejected these evidences to the last. I would simply direct your attention to a single fact —

the recorded behaviour of the rulers of the Jews, subsequently to the Resurrection, as containing in itself an unanswerable reply. Compelled, by a force of testimony not to be withstood, to admit the fact of our Lord's Resurrection; silencing, in the same moment, every struggle of conscience and conviction; with a coolness worthy of the father of lies, they catch at this last and desperate refuge; they suborn a heathen soldiery (at the hazard of their lives) to cloak, by an abandoned falsehood, what they could no otherwise hope should even for the moment be concealed; thus, as it were in the face of the sun, fulfilling against themselves the prophetic intimation in our Lord's parable, that *no evidences* can satisfy *an unbelieving heart*. For, can the reflecting mind hesitate to pronounce unbelief like theirs proof even against a vision from heaven, which thus "would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead?" What a fearful vindication is here of the free agency of man! how large this assertion of the dignity of his nature,—that power to choose which he holds in common with angels in heaven, and with angels in hell. In this one incident we have the assurance (and what does not this imply?) that man, too, can go forth to battle against his Maker, and defy the armies of the living God.

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The conduct of these unhappy men affords, then, no light presumption, that the miraculous appearance in the case of Saint Paul (far from imposing a chain on the freedom of his will) was but a provision of Divine wisdom for carrying into fruitful operation the work previously commenced by the Holy Spirit in his heart; a provision for bringing into action, in a worthy cause, motives and principles already divinely implanted there; for giving the right direction to a mistaken, but honest zeal; for affording certainty to a mind, blind as yet to the truth, but not so blind as to be closed against conviction. For, to return to the rulers of the Jews, must we not infer from their hardened continuance in infidelity, amidst the unquestioned truth, and the awakening terrors of the Resurrection, that, in the case of Saul of Tarsus, a like weight of testimony had not been withstood? that while, in concert with the Sanhedrim, he had resisted and fought against the truth, the truth had not, with equal fulness, been presented to his mind? that, although in common with the misled multitude, he might have known much, yet from him, as from the people, much, also, had been concealed? These inferences, collected from the reason simply of the case, are placed beyond question by irrefragable authority,

— the confession of the holy Apostle himself. “I obtained mercy,” he writes in allusion to his persecuting zeal, “because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”

I shall instance but one passage more in proof that, in the miraculous calling and conversion of Saint Paul, no violation was meant or offered to the liberty of his will. The passage to which I refer occurs in his defence before Agrippa; where he concludes his relation of the appearance on the way to Damascus in the following remarkable words: “Whereupon, O King Agrippa, *I was not disobedient* unto the heavenly vision.” Let us consider these words, and then ask ourselves, could a stronger intimation be needful than that which this declaration affords, that his freedom of choice was left still unimpaired, that he was in nowise bereft of the power to disobey?

Thus far it has been my object to show, from the circumstances which attended his calling to the Christian ministry, and from his prompt obedience to the heavenly call, that Saint Paul, before the period of his miraculous conversion, had been not only within the contemplation of a restraining Providence, but also under the merciful control of God’s preventing grace. If these inferences be just, they will be likely to receive light

and confirmation from those portions of the New Testament, which record the life and ministry of the Apostle of the Gentiles. We will direct, therefore, our attention, in the next place, to what has come down to us of Saint Paul's earlier history, and examine whether, or how far, we can discover, at this period, any tokens or traces of the special guardianship of Heaven ; any principles or impressions, which would bespeak controlling care, or conducting influences from above ; any predisposing outward circumstances, which would seem to conspire in forming him for the leading part he so greatly acted ; any indwelling springs of piety and goodness, which would appear to have combined towards fitting him for the exalted station he so eminently filled.

It should be noticed, here, that we are indebted for the ample means which we possess of investigating this most instructive branch of the present subject, wholly, perhaps, to the difficulties of Saint Paul's providential allotment ; for, the peculiar circumstances of his life and ministry, the delicacy of his situation as the Apostle of the Gentiles, and the unavoidable difficulties hence arising in mistrust and jealousies on the part of his countrymen the Jews, called upon, or rather compelled, this master in the work of righteousness to lay open

before the world the course and habits of his life, and the inmost recesses of his character, as an unbelieving Jew, in vindication of his life and character as a Christian and an Apostle.

We must remember, therefore, while we open out the earlier portion of his history, that every particular which we possess relative to his birth, his education, and his "manner of life amongst his own nation," has come down to us from the Apostle's own lips and pen.

In the first place, then, Saint Paul was not only born "of the stock of Israel," but he was the lineal descendant, also, "of the house of Benjamin," an inheritor of the blessing of that favourite child of Jacob. The tribe which first gave to Israel a king, was allotted the still more glorious pre-eminence of giving to the Gentile world its Apostle. If the first Saul had resembled Jonathan the friend of David, the Lord would not have rejected him from being head over Israel; but the Patriarch's blessing departed for a season from the family of Benjamin, only to return with heightened and unfading glory; and heaven, at length, united, in another Saul, a dignity far transcending that of the father, with more than the virtues of the son.

But Saint Paul was not only by descent a member of this favoured tribe; he was descended,

also, with every advantage of family and kindred, in a pure and undiluted line. No alien blood, mingling in his lineage, flowed to weaken his inherent attachment to the land of promise and the law; no foreign ties, linked with his affections, tended to wean his heart from the religion and the God of Jacob: he was by father and by mother of the house of Israel, as his expression "an Hebrew of the Hebrews" implies. He was the child, certainly, of strict and conscientious, probably, moreover, of pious parents. In his early institution no pains were spared that he should be well instructed in the religion of his forefathers. It seems not improbable that some care was, at the same time, taken, that he might grow up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Born at Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, he was sent, while yet a child, to Jerusalem. In that holy city (during her better days the chosen dwelling-place of Jehovah, and still the seat of learning for the study of the law and of the prophets) he was brought up at the feet of the wise and venerable Gamaliel, the most accomplished of the Jewish doctors; that Gamaliel who boldly stood forward in the Sanhedrim in behalf of the Apostles, when the rulers would have put them to death; whom all the people held in reverence, and to whose temperate counsels the

most violent agreed. By this venerable Pharisee, Saint Paul (himself the son of a Pharisee) was bred up in that strictest sect of the Jews' religion; and by him he was taught, after the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, to look forward, by the eye of faith, to the hope of the promise made of God unto the fathers; to the long-awaited coming of the Messiah, and the resurrection from the dead.

Thus far, in reviewing the early life of the Apostle of the Gentiles, it has been considered as connected with the course of God's providence. In which view, the many and singular advantages of his parentage and education, present, assuredly, no light intimation of divine forethought and interference exercised in his belief. In contemplating, however, the operations of God's preventing grace, we must turn our regards from the outward circumstances of the Apostle's life, to his moral and spiritual character and attainments; assured that whatever traces of goodness we may discover here, can have originated only with Him from whom cometh every good, no less than every perfect gift.

For our safe guidance on this important head, we have but to commit ourselves implicitly to the direction of Saint Paul himself, and to the witness which the fraud and malice of his opponents forced

the holy Apostle to bear of himself. To counteract the schemes of their lying seducers, his fatherly anxiety for the well-being of the Churches of Galatia, and of the Saints at Philippi, wrests from him the avowal, that, while yet in the state of unbelief, "he was zealous towards God;" "and touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless." When standing on his defence before the Roman commandant of Jerusalem, in presence of the chief priests and of the assembled council of the Jews, the holy Apostle commences his public vindication, by pleading boldly the indwelling sense of known and conscious integrity, the witness of an approved and an approving conscience: — "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived *in all good conscience* before God until this day." On another occasion of still greater publicity, and of still graver moment, in the same noble confidence of irreproachable integrity, he appeals to his mortal enemies, in the presence of king Agrippa, to bear testimony to the innocence of his life: — "My manner of life from my youth up (which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem) know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning (if they would testify), that after the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee." No accumulation of

evidence can add strength to the argument for the moral excellence of Saint Paul's character, even "from his youth up," which is contained in this generous appeal. Conscious innocence could alone have made it; unblemished uprightness only could have borne it out. He was too fully acquainted with the temper of his accusers, and knew too well their murderous intent, to have presented (in making such an appeal) the minutest opening to adversaries on the alert to mark every advantage, — men who would eagerly have caught at the first semblance of occasion to magnify the most venial errors of their victim into criminal offences — his most trivial blemishes into stains of the darkest dye.

In this preliminary discourse it has been attempted to sketch a brief outline of the personal history of the holy Apostle Saint Paul, down to the period of his miraculous conversion. In the earlier portion of his various life, we have had occasion to point out marks and indications not to be mistaken of the predisposing care of a restraining Providence; and some opportunities, also, of discerning impressions and principles, which could have proceeded only from the good influences, and secret guidance, of God's preventing grace. The purity of his descent, the strictness of his educa-

tion, and the exemplary soundness of his moral character, very remarkably combined to form this chief of the Apostles. His ardent attachment to his country and his country's faith; his perfect acquaintance with the Mosaic ritual, the Prophets, and the law of the fathers (not to speak at large in this place of that extended learning, which qualified him to control the proud philosophy of Greece); his piety towards God; and even his persecuting zeal, — *all* we have seen contributing, under the direction of preventing grace, to prepare for his exalted ministry this messenger whom the Lord had chosen to bear his name before the Gentiles, and the children of Israel, and kings.

On the present occasion, my remarks have been restricted to the history and character of Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the Church of Christ. At future opportunities, I propose to extend the inquiry to the Christian life, conversation, and ministry of Saint Paul, the Apostle of the Gentile world. But I should be wanting alike to the subject, and to those who hear me, were I not to direct attention to the reflections of a practical kind, which naturally arise out of that portion of the Apostle's history which we have just concluded. For, of what use or benefit were it to us thus to have traced, in the youthful history of this chosen mes-

senger of the most high God, the rise and progress of preventing grace, if we may not derive, from this inquiry, improvement to ourselves, and lessons for individual application? From what has been now submitted, one most important lesson may be conveyed in a few words. It is an undoubted truth, that the impressions and influences of God's Holy Spirit, however they may vary in the degrees of their operation, according to the diversity of circumstances under which they act, and the variety of subjects they have to do with, still must bear a mutual resemblance and correspondency, both in their character, and in their fruits. We, consequently, are privileged to try the reality of their agency in our own hearts and lives, by comparing these with the life and example of the chief of the Apostles. From the history and example of this eminent convert to the faith of Christ, whose conversion was the object and result of a miraculous interposition, we yet learn that the Lord is not in the whirlwind, the earthquake, or the fire, but, as of old, "in the still small voice;" that the grace of God delighteth not in sudden changes, or violent emotions; that the power, on the contrary, of the Holy Spirit, is silent commonly and secret in its most effectual operations: and hence we must infer, that as, in the *ordinary* dispositions

of divine grace, a pure and holy temperament of heart and life is acquired by almost imperceptible degrees; so that temperament may decline and perish, by degrees not less imperceptible. The trials, indeed, and the temptations, which are incident to the Christian warfare, as soldiers of Christ Jesus, it is our lot and honour to endure; safe, so long as we continue faithful, in the faithfulness of Him, who, by the mouth of his holy Apostle, hath promised that he will not suffer us to be tried or tempted above that we are able to bear. Let us, however, at the same time, be mindful that this very assurance throws wholly upon ourselves the awful responsibility, should we neglect to cultivate, or dare to abuse, the aids and advantages which his grace and his providence supply. "The Spirit of God," observes an ancient father, "is a delicate thing." Would we, then, my brethren, win and secure his abiding favour, we must become jealous guardians of his sacred rights, and conscientiously shun every avenue to self-temptation or self-deceit; since, if one moment we relax in watchfulness, another may betray us into guilty error, and this error become the forerunner of irremediable evil.

Let us, then, be mindful, and treasure the reflection in our hearts, that one slighted injunction

of an anxious parent, one neglected admonition of a diligent instructor, one forgotten warning of a faithful minister, one rejected counsel of a real friend,—may arrest the course of our moral and religious improvement, may wither the fairest promise of early piety, or corrupt the maturer attainments of a more advanced condition, and may, at last, compel the reluctant Spirit of God to withdraw his guardian care, and to take from our breasts an everlasting flight! Let us, therefore, ponder in our hearts, and study (through divine grace assisting our honest endeavours) to exemplify, in our daily practice, that saying of our blessed Lord —“WATCH and PRAY that ye may not enter into temptation.”

SERMON II.

LIFE OF SAINT PAUL SUBSEQUENT TO HIS CONVERSION.

1 COR. xv. 10.

“ But by the grace of God I am what I am : and his grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain ; but I laboured more abundantly than they all : yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

IN a former discourse, attention was directed to the movements and successful progress of the grace of God (chiefly, it will be remembered, of God's preventing grace), as exemplified in the person of Saint Paul, and in the history of this great Apostle to the period of his conversion. I had, then, occasion to consider the ways and influences of divine grace, in connection with the dispositions of an overruling Providence, for bringing to himself, and to the service of his Church, the extraordinary individual, whom God had separated, even from his mother's womb, to reveal in him, after a manner before unexampled,

the eternal Son, that he might preach among the heathen the kingdom of Christ Jesus.

In resuming the subject, I shall now take up the history of Saint Paul from the period of his miraculous conversion,—from that crisis in his life, in which the influences of preventing grace became open and abiding in their operation; to the end, that, following the steps of the Christian, and the Apostle, we may gather from the inspired record of his after-life, and lay up for the better safeguard and improvement of our own, the methods, and the fruits, herein exemplified of the mysterious and manifold grace of God.

The text itself suggests an apt division of the subject at its present stage; while it supplies, at the same time, the most striking exemplification on record of that righteous boldness, which, in every conjuncture that called for its exercise, so characteristically marked the conduct and deportment of the Apostle of the Gentiles. “By the grace of God,” he writes, “I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

This passage resolves our further inquiry into the following heads: 1. the effects of divine grace

in the Apostle's life ; 2. the effects of divine grace upon his ministry. For Saint Paul, here, directs our attention to the evidences and fruits of grace in his apostolic labours, no less than to its fruits and evidences in his life and conversation: "By the grace of God I am what I am," leading us to inquire, in the first place, what was Saint Paul? "His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain," with the remainder of the passage, to consider, secondly, the character and success of his ministry.

The former of these topics I shall endeavour briefly to examine in the present; the latter, it is my intention to reserve for a separate discourse. From both heads may be derived much and most important practical instruction.

"By the grace of God I am what I am." The question plainly suggested by these words is,—What was Saint Paul? what the Apostle's spirit? what the fashion of his life? In this branch of inquiry, we are (as I have already intimated) remarkably aided by the nature of the case before us; a case which affords signal exemplification of that mysterious control of God's Providence, which, in ways unsearchable by the eye of man, and with wisdom discoverable only in the blessedness of the results, makes provision so rich and various,

for the moral and spiritual, no less than for the natural, well-being of his own world. In the preceding discourse, I have stated how much we owe to the difficulties of Saint Paul's providential allotment. For hence arises the facility which the Christian world possesses of analyzing, not the life and actions only, but the heart and inmost thoughts, also, of its greatest human guide. For, the peculiar circumstances of Saint Paul's life and ministry (to some particulars of which I have already adverted); the delicacy of his situation as the Apostle of the Gentiles, and the difficulties growing out of this, in mistrust and jealousies on the part of his Jewish fellow-countrymen; these, with numerous consequent particulars, which it is not essential to our present object to pursue, were so providentially permitted, ordered, and overruled, as to extort from this chief of the Apostles mention of himself, of his life, his conversation, and the inmost movements of his heart, so full, so frequent, and so unreserved, that to acquaint ourselves thoroughly with the character and spirit of Saint Paul, to observe, in the instance of this great master-builder, the ways and workmanship of the grace of God, there needs only that we acquire a just acquaintance with that character and spirit, as they are placed before us in his imperishable writings.

From his writings, therefore, and from what is, in the Acts of the Apostles, recorded by Saint Luke of his friend and father in Christ, I shall select a few illustrations out of the multitude of particulars which would be found to throw a profitable light upon the *Christian* life and ministry of this chosen servant of the most high God; beginning with what belongs properly to the character of the man, and to the effects of divine grace on his life and conversation, this being the head of our subject of which I am here to treat.

There is a form of exhortation which we frequently meet with in the Epistles of Saint Paul, and which is used *by him only* amongst the sacred writers, upon which I purpose to ground my observations on his character; without reference, indeed, to which no just observations can be made either on the life or on the ministry of this Apostle. I allude to the remarkable invitation which he, on various occasions, addresses to the Churches amongst whom he laboured, that they should study to become imitators of him, as he was the imitator of the Lord Jesus.

This invitation we may safely adopt as our leading guide in the present head of inquiry, namely, What was Saint Paul? Saint Paul, we hence infer, was, in no ordinary sense, and after no

ordinary manner, the imitator of his Divine Master. And from this it follows, as an immediate consequence, that the Apostle possessed a large measure of this Master's spirit, even of the spirit of Him whose chosen distinction, while he dwelt amongst men, was that of meekness and lowliness of heart. Saint Paul, then, was of a meek and humble spirit; a particular the more deserving of attention in marking the power and progress of the grace of God in his soul, since it can be plainly shown from the tenor of his life before his conversion, and may be gathered even from some subsequent traits, that the distinguishing features of Saint Paul's original character were incompatible with outward guard of temper, no less than with inward humility of mind.

The bitterness of spirit which Saul of Tarsus had discovered at the martyrdom of Saint Stephen, and the unrelenting severity with which he afterwards pursued the disciples of Christ, persecuting them (as he himself tells us) even unto strange cities, have been usually, and very justly, attributed to the ardour of youthful religious zeal. It may, however, be worthy of consideration, whether, in his instance, the ardency of enthusiasm and of youth was wholly unmingled with another leaven. A leading circumstance in the Apostle's early in-

stitution, the character, namely, and conduct of the religious instructor under whom he was brought up, appears to render this point at least matter of question. Saint Paul, we learn, had been, from his youth up, the disciple, and, it may well be concluded, the favourite disciple, of the venerable and revered Gamaliel; of that Gamaliel to whose generous and gentle counsels in the Jewish Sanhedrim the Apostles were indebted, at a most critical conjuncture, for their liberty, and, under Providence, for their lives. It was not assuredly from such an instructor, that Saul of Tarsus could have imbibed maxims of bigotry and persecution. Assuredly it was not. The character, on the contrary, and the recorded conduct of this Jewish doctor, would lead us to look for very opposite principles, in the man who had thus grown up, from childhood, at his feet. Whence, then, did it arise, that, while Gamaliel acted openly the part of their protector, the first Christians found the bitterest of persecutors in his disciple?

The truth is, that, to account rationally, in any measure, for such wayward violence, in a mind honest, well-principled, and highly cultivated, like that of Saint Paul, we must, in reason and common sense, look further, and for some more subtle spring of action, than the force, simply, and fer-

vour of religious zeal. A native loftiness of temper, blended with this zeal, appears to offer a satisfactory solution of the Apostle's case. The unyielding truths of Christianity with him had to encounter prejudices impatient of question or control; and the issue of the conflict is deeply marked in every movement of the unconverted zealot. Every recorded movement of the persecuting Saul broadly indicates a spirit in painful opposition to the spirit of humility; and thus, through the consideration of his natural character and temper, while yet unsubdued by the influences of a law higher than the law of Moses, we are conducted to the same instructive conclusion which the Apostle has himself laid down for us in the text, namely, that the eminent share which Saint Paul afterwards attained of his Divine Master's meekness, is to be ascribed wholly to the power and prevalence in his heart of God's assisting grace.

Some indications of this native height of character may be discovered in the history of the Apostle of the Gentiles, even after his conversion and calling to the Christian ministry. The instance which I here have chiefly in view is worthy of much attention, since it affords, at the same time, a remarkable evidence of the triumph, in the case of this Apostle, of divine grace over human frailty,

in the deepening growth of humility in his heart. I allude to the well-known contention which took place at Antioch between Saint Paul and his brother Apostle Saint Barnabas, and which is so impartially recorded (not improbably at his own instance) by Saint Paul's friend and companion, in the fifteenth chapter of the book of Acts. On this occasion these great fellow-labourers appear to have, for the moment, betrayed in practice the justness of their mutual avowal to their idolatrous hearers at Lystra, "We also are men of like passions with you."

Though familiar to all, it is right to recall to view, at this point, Saint Luke's narrative of this transaction. As they prepared to revisit the Churches of Asia, Barnabas, we are told, determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. This purpose of his friend was resisted by Saint Paul, who firmly refused to be a second time accompanied by one, who, on a former occasion, had wilfully withdrawn himself from them. In so resisting, Saint Paul was unquestionably in the right: his was no cause, and those were no times, for compromising measures, or for doubtful men. He, moreover, could have been influenced only by regard to the general good; while in Saint Barnabas there was room, at least, for the indulgence

of private feeling; for the companion whom he desired to take with them was his sister's son. In the *matter*, therefore, of his conduct, in this instance, Saint Paul was plainly in the path of duty. The *manner* only can be liable to exception. The Apostle Barnabas, in adhering to his determination, had probably reckoned too far upon the privileges of friendship and of former services. Saint Paul, in his resistance, possibly relied with too open a firmness on the unquestioned superiority of his mind and judgment. The result is affecting. These brothers in the ministry of Christ Jesus parted from each other, to labour in concert no more.

The record, however, of their sharp contention*, independently of its importance as matter of evidence, is further and yet more deeply valuable in this respect, that it enables us to collect from Saint Paul's history, at subsequent periods of his life, a testimony of a very remarkable kind to the growing meekness of his spirit, no less than to the native tenderness of his heart. The book of Acts, it will be recollected, was written by Saint Luke, the friend of Saint Paul, and one of the chosen companions of his labours. From the period of

* παροξυσμός.

the dispute in question, recorded in the fifteenth chapter, we meet, it is observable, no further mention of the Apostle Barnabas. The omission was a necessary consequence of his separation from Saint Paul, to whose apostolic course Saint Luke devoted the remaining chapters of his history. The date, however, of its composition, admits of our observing, at an early place of the Acts of the Apostles, a decisive though delicate mark of the tenderness and unabated attachment with which Saint Barnabas was had in remembrance by his ancient fellow-labourer. According to the generally received opinion, Saint Luke composed the book of Acts at the distance of nearly fourteen years from the time of the difference which took place between Saint Paul and Saint Barnabas, and of their consequent final separation. This book, as various commentators have noticed, bears many and undoubted internal marks of having been composed under the direction, if not under the immediate superintendence, of Saint Paul. In the eleventh chapter there is mention made of the coming of Saint Barnabas to Antioch, accompanied by this character of the Apostle, "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." They who have taken notice how sparingly and briefly *characters* are introduced by the sacred writers of the

New Testament, will be at no loss to appreciate the honourable commendation which is conveyed in these few words. But if, as competent judges have believed, the book of Acts was written under the inspection of Saint Paul — if a single passage of the history fell from the Apostle's pen — it is impossible, surely, to mistake the quarter whence *this* remarkable eulogy proceeded. With respect to Saint Paul himself, the introduction of this eulogy on his fellow Apostle must be regarded as a testimony, not more to the native tenderness, than to the deepening lowliness of his heart. In looking, for example, to the merits of the debate between them, the natural effect of this character of Saint Barnabas plainly is, to leave on the mind an impression no less favourable in behalf of his moderation, than the violence which the same book of Acts records to have been formerly exercised by Saul of Tarsus, must be prejudicial to the disadvantage of the latter Apostle.

But the humility of Saint Paul's temper, and his successful study, as he advanced in his Christian course, of this branch of the character of his Divine Master, may be yet more strikingly exemplified in a further particular, not unconnected with the controversy in question. John, surnamed Mark, the nephew of Barnabas, was the cause of this

painful dissension. Saint Paul saw fit to reject John as a companion of his ministry ; and the distressing result of this rejection was likely to confirm, rather than to do away, in the Apostle's mind, an impression justly unfavourable. This, however, was not so. For, in Saint Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, we find Mark, the nephew of Barnabas, restored to the Apostle's confidence, to companionship in his ministry, and (with this special view), earnestly recommended to the consideration and hospitality of the Church at Colosse, a city adjoining that very country of Pamphylia, whence John had formerly departed from the work.

But Saint Paul has left us a yet more affecting proof of the full restoration of Mark to his favour. The second Epistle to Timothy was written during this Apostle's second imprisonment at Rome, and but a little while before his martyrdom. At this season, Saint Paul was treated with a severity which struck terror amongst his followers: he was forsaken even by his nearest friends. In the height of his distress and suffering, he calls upon the tried and faithful Timothy to attend him. And here it is that we find a *last* mention of the nephew of Barnabas, equally honourable to himself and to the spirit of Saint Paul: "Take," saith the holy

Apostle, "Mark, and bring him with thee; *for he is profitable to me for the ministry.*"

We have now considered the character of Saint Paul, as he was an imitator of the humility which was in Christ Jesus; and have marked, in the healthful growth and increase of this mature attainment, the progressive nature of the influences of the grace of God, as exemplified in the history of this Apostle. In his example we have seen a temper, by nature high and impatient of control, melted gradually down into the spirit of a little child. Let us not content ourselves with "seeing this great sight;" but study rather, in this matter, "to go and do likewise;" to become, in this high attainment, imitators of Saint Paul, as he was the imitator of the Model of infinite perfection.

I have particularly instanced the humility of Saint Paul, as illustrating the influences of divine grace on his character; because the virtue of humility, above all other features of the Christian life, appears to have been essentially opposed to the natural cast and temper of the Apostle's mind. To relate and exemplify in full, on the present occasion, further particulars of his life and conversation, as formed on the life and conversation of our blessed Lord, would open, indeed, a fair and fruitful, but far too extended, a field. Was the

Lord Jesus, for example, patient under suffering? the prison-houses of Jerusalem, of Cæsarea, of Philippi, and of Rome, bear witness to the faith and patience of his chosen follower and servant. Was HE resigned, in all things, to the will of his Heavenly Father? the writings and the life of the Apostle of the Gentiles everywhere abound with expressions, and with deeds, of the same righteous resignation. "Christ," saith the imprisoned confessor, writing to the Church of Philippi, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." The Philippians were qualified to understand this language: they had been used to see their Apostle under torture, and in chains.

I shall instance one more example of this spirit. It is a saying of Saint Paul, which Saint Luke has preserved at, perhaps, the most critical moment of his apostolic course. During his stay at Cæsarea, when on his way toward Jerusalem, for the last time previous to his captivity, Saint Paul is made acquainted, by Agabus the prophet, with the nature and extent of the sufferings which now awaited him there. The warning fell with peculiar force from one, whose former prediction of a great famine which should be throughout all the world, Saint Paul himself had heard delivered, and had

seen so signally fulfilled. The brethren of the place, and those even who had been used to witness and to share his dangers — the holy Evangelist himself, with the other companions of his ministry — hearing this prophetic intimation, besought him not to proceed: "Then," saith the sacred historian, "Paul answered, What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."

In the human character of our blessed Lord, another striking feature is, unconquerable zeal. This might justly be looked for in him of whom it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Saint Paul's resemblance to his Divine Master in this particular of his character, is legible, not in his actions only, but in every word of his mouth, and in every sentence from his pen. Whether we follow the Apostle's oral teaching in Saint Luke's history, or read him in his own inspired page, wheresoever we may open, is that same word written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." It is needless to adduce examples. I shall content myself with inviting attention to a single fact. Of the Epistles of Saint Paul, five were written from a prison; the latest of these, his second Epistle to Timothy, under the prophetic

foretaste of death ; and if, in these letters, the spirit of the Apostle's zeal have aught in it peculiar, it is to be marked in the increasing strength only, and by the brightness of its flame.

In the last place, the character of Christ Jesus, both human and divine, may be considered as expressed in that "new commandment," which our Lord himself delivered as containing the substance and the sum of the gospel as well as of the law, — the love of God above all things, and of our neighbour as ourselves. The strength of this principle in the heart of Saint Paul, impregnates, throughout, his writings, his ministry, and his life. It is sufficient to observe, that whoever shall peruse with candour, and with due carefulness, the thirteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, will rest satisfied that no skill, whether of man or angel, could conceive or dictate what is therein expressed, other than that which has its dwelling in the depths, and its overflowing from the fulness, of the heart.

Among the characteristic peculiarities in Saint Paul's manner of instructing, I have already pointed out his exhortations to the Churches to be imitators of him, as he was the imitator of Christ. Hence may be deduced a canon most worthy of attention, as carrying us into the in-

most movements of the Apostle's life. The several Churches, amongst whom he laboured, and for whom, in the first instance, he wrote, were to form themselves after the model of their inspired instructor; consequently, the body of Christian principles, discipline, and practice, contained throughout the Epistles of Saint Paul, must be considered as lessons of holy living, copied out by the Apostle from his own character and heart. His precepts, therefore, we are to receive as the picture of his life. They are such as these:—"Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, *humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. And, above all these things, put on CHARITY, which is the bond of perfectness.*" Again, "In lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than himself. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let the same mind, in other words, the same humbleness of mind, be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

In the preceding remarks, we have in some measure before us an answer to the inquiry, which I proposed as the subject of this discourse, namely, "What was Saint Paul?" I shall point out but one passage more. The place which I have in view is the Apostle's account of *himself*,

in his parting address to the elders of the Church of Ephesus at Miletus. This address contains the marks of his imitation of Christ, to which I have particularly adverted, very nearly in the order, and to the effect, according to which I have endeavoured to place them before you. The Apostle commences, after his accustomed manner, by an appeal to the knowledge which his hearers possessed of his ministry and life: "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord *with all humility of mind*, and with many tears and temptations which befel me by the lying in wait of the Jews. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions await me. But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

In the present faint, but not unfaithful outline, of *the personal character* of Saint Paul, the examples which I have selected of the Apostle's lowliness of mind, of his patience under sufferings,

his resignation in affliction, his invincible zeal, and his unfailing love, have, I trust, afforded some profitable insight into the head of my general subject, which has been particularly treated of in this discourse, and into the true force and significance of the saying of the holy Apostle to which I have so frequently adverted, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

I would conclude this head with a few words of practical application. It is for us, my brethren, to consider, and to keep in mind, that the infirmities of temper, of spirit, of disposition, which have been noticed in Saint Paul, are infirmities to which all flesh is naturally heir. The question is, not as to our liability to like infirmities, but as to our duty, as Christians, in dealing with them. Now, if we would secure the high blessings and privileges of our Christian calling, all our infirmities, whatever these may be, must be subdued in us, as we have seen his infirmities brought under subjection in the example of the chief of the Apostles; whose imitators we, equally with his more immediate disciples, are invited to become. And here, there is one thing equally certain and important, namely, that our infirmities can be subdued only by like methods; that by like means alone, can our faults be amended,

our frailties corrected, our better feelings elicited, our gifts and graces matured, and our hearts transformed into temples of the Holy Ghost. With us, as with Saint Paul, sovereign grace must be the only strength and stay. And by us, finally, as by him, "the grace of God which bringeth salvation" must be continually sought after by prayer, by watchfulness, and by patient continuance in well-doing unto the end. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

SERMON III.

CHARACTER OF SAINT PAUL'S MINISTRY.

1 COR. XV. 10.

“ But by the grace of God I am what I am : and his grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain ; but I laboured more abundantly than they all : yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

IN my first discourse on this text, the statement of the holy Apostle Saint Paul was illustrated chiefly by particulars drawn from his history previous to his conversion. My design, it will be remembered, there, was to mark, in the circumstances of Saint Paul's early life, the more hidden course of God's Providence and preventing grace, in preparing the Apostle of the Gentile world for his arduous and exalted ministration.

Having offered such remarks as appeared suitable to the design of this branch of my subject, I proposed, in the next place, to take up the history of Saint Paul from the period of his miraculous conversion, and to pursue, after a like method, my

observations upon the further progress in the holy Apostle's heart, both of God's preventing, and of his assisting, grace.

At this stage, the inquiry divided itself naturally into the following heads:—1. The effects of divine grace in the Apostle's life; 2. The effects of divine grace upon his ministry. The former of these heads has been considered in my second,—the latter is the subject of the present sermon.

Under the first head, the Apostle's statement, "By the grace of God I am what I am," afforded us occasion to consider, what was Saint Paul? under the second, the remainder of this context leads us to investigate the character of his apostolic ministry: "And his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

The labourers over whom, in the above passage, Saint Paul openly asserts his *ministerial* superiority, were no other than those of whom, in the sentence immediately preceding, he accounts himself, *personally*, the least, his brethren the Twelve Apostles. It seems natural, therefore, from the comparison which Saint Paul has himself instituted in this place, that in prosecuting my investigation into the character of his apostolic labours, I should examine

briefly, in the first place, into the nature and extent of the labours of the twelve; in other words, into the character of their ministry.

At our entrance upon this topic of inquiry, a most important passage presents itself for consideration. I refer to the commission which Christ gave to "the eleven," presently before he was received up into heaven. This commission I shall take as it stands in Saint Mark's Gospel.

"And he said unto them, Go ye into *all* the world, and preach the Gospel unto *every* creature." The inference, in the first place, to be made respecting this injunction, is plain and unavoidable. In whatever sense we are to understand his charge, it was unquestionably carried into effect by "the eleven" in that sense in which our blessed Lord himself designed it should be accomplished. The question before us, therefore, is, not whether, but how, the commission of Christ to the eleven Apostles has been, in point of fact, fulfilled. This inquiry it is now my purpose to institute; since, in order to make any just inferences respecting the ministerial character of the Apostles, our inferences must be made with strict reference to this commission of our Lord, and to its clear fulfilment.

With respect to the commission itself, it must be interpreted in one or other of two ways, — in

the literal, or in a figurative sense. 1. Either the Apostles, in virtue of this commission, were to act from the commencement of their ministerial labours as missionaries of the gospel; with this view, dispersing themselves, first over Judea, and thence throughout the Roman empire, and the various known regions without its boundaries: 2. Or, having first preached Christ, and established the faith at Jerusalem, they were thenceforward to consider themselves chiefly as a council providentially selected and set apart, more fully to instruct the elder disciples, and to confirm and enlarge the faith of new converts; and when, by these means they should have gradually provided, and sent abroad, instruments thoroughly tempered for the great work in which they were about to be employed, in the next place, to observe the progress, and to direct the movements, of these lesser brethren; sealing, in due time, the subordinate but indispensable labours of those holy men, by the exercise of powers peculiar to their own higher ministration; by apostolic visits, and by the communication of apostolic gifts: and, lastly, that they were to regard their own body as a council constituted to receive, and investigate, and determine, all questions of a difficult or doubtful nature, which might hereafter arise in the administration of the infant Churches.

Few, I presume, will be disposed to question the presumption, that our Lord's commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature," *was* faithfully and fully carried into effect by his Apostles. But, if the charge *was* fulfilled, its fulfilment can be sought only in the one or in the other of the two foregoing ways. If the Apostles were designed to act as missionaries in propagating the Gospel, it must be manifest, even to a superficial observer of the case in question, that nothing short of their promptly dispersing themselves abroad, could enable them, in any measure, to accomplish, in its *literal* sense, the declared will of their Divine Master. And if they *did not* so disperse themselves throughout the earth, it is equally manifest, that the order and disposition to which, in the next place, I have adverted, must have been no less indispensable, to qualify the Apostles for the adequate discharge of those duties which *the spirit* of their trust, in this view of the commission to "the eleven," enjoined.

The letter of our Lord's injunction, at the first view, appears, I will own, to countenance the supposition that the former of these methods, the evangelizing process, was in the intention of the Divine Speaker. It remains for us to inquire, how far this more obvious interpretation is supported by the facts of

the sacred history. Before, however, we go on to these facts, I would simply observe, that, if we explain the passage referred to in the more *literal* sense, we shall find it difficult to reconcile the *unlimited* extent of the commission of Christ to "the eleven," with the subsequent appointment of Saint Paul to the Apostleship of the Gentiles. For, if the Apostles were to go personally throughout all the world, and personally every where to preach the gospel, by what peculiarity was his ministry to be distinguished? in what respect was he to be accounted the chief amongst his brethren? and wherein shall it be made to appear that he had pre-eminently "received grace and apostleship for the obedience to the faith among *all* nations," for the name of Christ Jesus?

This was the apostolical commission of Saint Paul. And it was in right of this unlimited commission, that the Apostle of the Gentiles did not hesitate to declare, that he had laboured more abundantly than all his brethren.

The date of the piece in which this declaration occurs, is important. The first Epistle to the Corinthians, according to the most approved authorities, was written about the year of our Lord fifty-seven; that is, twenty-four years subsequent to the period of his ascension, and to the conse-

quent descent of the Holy Ghost. From the day of Pentecost we are to date the operation of Christ's commission to his Apostles. Hence it appears, that twenty-four years subsequent to the time from which this commission had its full effect, the united labours of the twelve Apostles were exceeded in fruitfulness, by the single ministry of the Apostle of the Gentiles. Such a result, at so advanced a period of their work, leaves us to choose between the following conclusions: — Either the twelve Apostles were unfaithful to their trust, or their commission contains a sense deeper than its more literal interpretation: either they were slack in the performance of the duties of missionaries, or they had other duties besides those of the missionary to perform. Between these inferences, it is perfectly needless to direct your choice.

The line of conduct, *in fact*, adopted by the Apostles, affords, as I have already suggested, the best, and indeed the only safe interpretation of the commandment of Christ, and of the nature, consequently, and distinguishing duties of their apostolic office. In *their conduct*, therefore, we are to investigate the character of their ministry; its character, I mean, as agreeable to the designs, and growing out of the dispositions of Divine Wisdom, with regard not to the present only, but to the

prospective establishment of the Church of Christ upon earth.

I shall proceed, accordingly, to examine the nature and true signification of our blessed Lord's commission to "the eleven;" following, strictly, through some leading particulars, the facts of the sacred history.

After the day of Pentecost, the first and most natural care of the Apostles was, to preach the word and to establish the faith *at Jerusalem*. This object, we observe, was accomplished with speed and success worthy of "the great power of God." Three thousand, five thousand, presently uncounted multitudes of converts, were added unto the Church.

Upon these decisive results, I ground my first observation. If the Apostles had understood our Lord's commission in its *literal* sense, the first fruits of Saint Peter's ministry must have held out to them the clearest and most cheering encouragements, to go on their way rejoicing, to the instant execution of the mission entrusted to them, throughout the world. The number, the union, and the devotedness, of the new disciples, must speedily have relieved every anxiety on *their* account, and disposed their teachers, promptly and fearlessly, to extend their apostolic labours,

and the faith of Christ, in the first instance, over the neighbouring districts of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. The residence of one of their number (Saint Peter himself, for example) at Jerusalem, would, it is evident, have abundantly provided, both for the security, and for the future increase, of this central Church. It is to be considered, further, that the adoption of this line of conduct was already sanctioned, both by our blessed Lord's own example during his ministry on earth, and by the part which the Apostles themselves had taken at Christ's command. During a ministry of only three years, Christ Jesus had visited and taught throughout every quarter of the Holy Land. By our Lord's commandment, the Apostles, while he was yet alive, went forth into the towns, and over the surrounding country, preaching every where the kingdom of God.

With these considerations of analogy in our view, let us turn here to the history in the book of Acts. During an equal period of about three years, from the day of Pentecost to the martyrdom of Saint Stephen, we find, in Saint Luke's history, the twelve Apostles constantly assembled together at Jerusalem; shutting up, as it were, their labours, their miracles, and the Church itself of Christ, within her walls. Thus the state of things

continued, to the moment when the quiet of the Church of Jerusalem was providentially disturbed. By the persecution which arose against its members after the death of Saint Stephen, we read, that "they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria." In Saint Luke's narrative of this violent and total dispersion of the Church at Jerusalem, we meet the following remarkable exception, "and they were all scattered abroad — *except the Apostles.*" That is, excepting the very men, against whom the rage of the persecutors must have been primarily and chiefly directed.

From this remarkable fact, may be derived an inference, which I believe to be conclusive: namely, that the residence of the Apostles *as a body* at Jerusalem, was indispensable to the right discharge of the apostolic office, and to the general interests, consequently, of the cause of the Gospel throughout the world. The providence of God, accordingly, so ordered events, that the Apostles were enabled to hold their ground in the face of a persecution, which had "scattered abroad" (disseminated, "scattered as seed," is the force of Saint Luke's forcible expression) the entire Church besides.

The immediate consequences of this dispersion

of the brethren, lead us to a fresh conclusion, equally opposed to the literal interpretation of the charge of Christ to "the eleven." In the context of Saint Luke's relation we read, "they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." Now, if to go forth as missionaries throughout all the world, and every where personally to preach the Gospel, had been the distinctive character of the apostolic office, surely it must seem strange that the first-fruits of the Apostleship should have thus been reaped by those inferior brethren, who carried the Gospel, in the first place, throughout Judea and Samaria; thence into the countries of Phœnicia and Cyprus; and even as far as Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, and the seat of Roman Empire in the East.

But, while the character of that promulgation of Christianity which resulted from "the persecution that arose about Stephen," forbids our regarding the Apostles as missionaries of the word, the proceedings consequent upon that promulgation, at the same time, instruct us, that they had a higher office than the office of the missionary to fulfil. "Now," says the sacred writer, "when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria," converted by the preaching of Philip the Evangelist, "had received the word

of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost (for as yet, he was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus): Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

From this relation it appears: 1. That, in their joint apostolic visit to the city of Samaria, Saint Peter and Saint John went, neither in their individual capacity, nor of their own motion, but were formally deputed on this service by the assembly of their brethren at Jerusalem; 2. That they were deputed, not to convert, but to confirm converts in the faith; and 3. That the object of their apostolic mission was attained, not by the means common to them with ordinary missionaries, — the preaching of the word of God; but by means which Saint Paul characterizes as "the signs of an Apostle," by the communication of gifts which, at that period, it belonged exclusively to the apostolic office to bestow.

No sooner, however, are Saint Peter and Saint John duly commissioned and sent forth to the work of the ministry, than they give convincing proof, that their own previous delay, and the protracted residence of their apostolic brethren,

at Jerusalem, proceeded neither from distrust in themselves, nor from slackness in the discharge of their sacred office: that, as hitherto they had fulfilled the spirit of their divine Master's charge; so, when occasion called, they were equally prepared to fulfil it in the letter also. The two Apostles bore witness, in the first place, to the faith of Christ in Samaria; and, as they returned to Jerusalem, "they preached the Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans." But still they labour in prepared ground: for, in that city, and throughout these villages, the word had been already preached by those disciples, whom the first persecution had dispersed over the face of that land. After an interval of four years, we again read of Saint Peter passing (on a like mission) "throughout all quarters." Still, however, it is amongst the faithful that the holy Apostle ministers: the quarters spoken of still are those of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. If, on this occasion, "all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord," it will be remembered, *where* the miracle was wrought which occasioned their conversion; it will be recollected, that the visit of the holy Apostle was made "to *the Saints* which were at Lydda." Lastly, from the length of Saint Peter's residence, at this period, in Joppa, I think

it can be made satisfactorily to appear, that he came into these parts, not as a preacher, simply, of the Gospel, but as the commissioned representative of the Apostles. For, on reference to the map of Palestine, it will be seen, that Joppa was nearly the central point between the cities which lay along the coast of Judea; and, throughout the cities of the sea-coast, from Azotus to Cæsarea, the Gospel had been already established at least five years, by the ministry of the same Philip the Evangelist, whose preaching it was that had established the truth in Samaria, previous to the apostolic mission thither of Saint Peter and Saint John.

At the commencement of this discourse it was observed, that thus far, that is down to the year of our Lord forty-one, and seven years from the day of Pentecost, the facts of the sacred history lead us to regard the office of the twelve Apostles, not as a ministry of independent individuals, but in the light of a well-ordered council of the whole body; and to interpret the charge which they received from their divine Head, on the eve of the Ascension, not as a commission to so many preachers of the Gospel, but as a trust to men divinely chosen and set apart to preside over the lesser labourers in their Master's vineyard; and, by the vigilant

use and exercise of their joint wisdom, to look after the present growth, and to provide, at the same time, for the future increase and establishment, in the most distant ages, of the Church of Christ upon earth.

We have only to follow the course of Saint Luke's history, to assure ourselves that this is no unjust representation of the office and apostolic commission of "the twelve." The Acts of the Apostles, we may every where perceive, to be the acts of *the body* rather than of *the men*: their ministry, not for the conversion of *individuals*, but for the confirmation of *churches* in the faith. To the latest mention of them in the book of Acts, about the year of our Lord fifty-eight, we find an Apostolic Council assembled at Jerusalem, to receive the communications, to confirm the faith, to direct the conduct, and to order the discipline, of the churches. Does Saint Barnabas (at an earlier period of the history), who was himself presently to be called to the Apostleship, go forth into Asia to the work of Christ? It is under *a commission* from the apostolic council of Jerusalem, and for the encouragement, chiefly, and confirmation of *believers* in the faith. Does Saint Peter carry his ministry beyond the limits of the Holy Land? The visits of the Apostle are

directed, not to heathens, or to unconverted Jews, but to a community already Christian, "the Church that was at Antioch." In the last place, it is deserving of every attention, that the epistles which we possess from the pen of this holy Apostle, are addressed, not to quarters where he himself had eminently laboured; not to the Churches of Palestine, in addressing whom, he would at once have discharged the proper functions of the Apostle, and indulged the home-felt satisfaction of the Father in Christ: but to the strangers dispersed throughout those Churches of Asia, which had been founded by the labours, and which gloried in the ministry, of Saint Paul.

It was natural, however, I must here observe, that Saint Peter should take a deep personal interest in the work of the Apostle of the Gentiles, and in the progress and fruits of his ministerial labours. Those chiefs amongst their brethren, Saint Peter and Saint Paul, as they were nearest to each other in their respective offices, were nearest to each other, also, in the distinctive characters of their Apostolic callings. The promise of Christ to Saint Peter was, that on him (on the ground-work, that is, which should be laid by Saint Peter's ministry) he would erect the building of his Church. By Saint Peter's

ministry, accordingly, the Church of Christ was founded at Jerusalem; by his ministry, the seeds of the Gospel (as we learn from the second chapter of the book of Acts) were first sown in the hearts of "Jews out of every nation under heaven:" And lastly, in the conversion, and the reception by the rite of baptism into the Church, of the family and kindred of the devout Cornelius, the kingdom of God was, through the ministry of this Apostle, thrown open to the Gentile world. By these means, and this instrumentality, was gradually prepared the ground-plot of that Church, of which the Apostle of the Gentiles was to be the master-builder. With how steadfast an eye, then, must not Saint Peter have contemplated the growing structure? With how deep an interest must he not have followed the master-builder's hand?

To this apostolic labourer we now return; and to the visible effects upon his ministry of the grace of God. The subject is one not easily exhausted; nor lightly to be taken into ordinary hands. The view, however, of Saint Paul's ministry, which it is my design here to open out, does not require that I should enter at any length into a detailed analysis of its character; since every observation of a general nature, which has

been already made relative to the office of "the twelve," and the character of their apostolic ministration, is comprised within, and may be taken to illustrate, the office and ministerial character of the Apostle of the Gentiles. In this one respect only, the ministry of Saint Paul is to be regarded as essentially different from that of his apostolic brethren, that in him alone was perfectly united the character of *the Evangelist* with that of the Apostle.

To the last remark, the Apostle Barnabas may be thought, at the first view, to furnish an exception. Throughout the entire course of the mission, to which they were jointly appointed by the Holy Ghost, the labours of Saint Barnabas among the heathen, as well as among the unbelieving Jews, plainly kept pace with the labours of Saint Paul. At another place, I had occasion to observe upon the painful separation of these eminent fellow-labourers, as illustrating the growing humility of the latter Apostle. I have now to remark, both in their coming together preparatory to their first joint mission, and in their final parting, some traces of those less obvious dispositions of Divine Providence, which perpetually afford to the observant reader of Scripture history, fresh indications of the authenticity and divine origin of the sacred volume. You will recall to mind Saint

Luke's account of the difficulty which Saint Paul experienced, when he first attempted to associate with the members of the church of Jerusalem. The prominent share which he had taken in the murder of Saint Stephen, and the deliberate cruelties which he afterwards exercised upon the faithful, now closed the eyes and hearts of these sufferers against their converted persecutor. "He essayed," says the sacred historian, "to join himself unto the disciples: but they were *all* afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." From this situation the generous confidence of Barnabas at length relieved him: "Barnabas," we are informed, "took him, and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way."

With this incident in our view, I shall resume the consideration of Saint Paul's first mission in concert with Saint Barnabas. Antioch, it is to be observed, and the island of Cyprus, were the fields of their earliest common labours. Now, the fellowship of their ministry in these places receives a remarkable illustration from Acts xi. 19., where we read, that "they which were scattered abroad upon *the persecution that arose about Stephen*, travelled as far as Phenice, and CYPRUS and ANTIOCH, preaching the word." Saul of Tarsus, it is ma-

nifest, would meet little credit or acceptance in churches thus founded by the very men, whom his own cruelties had driven into exile. If, in Jerusalem, he essayed in vain to join himself to the disciples, what could have been his means, unaided and alone, of awakening confidence in those distant parts? But the means were divinely provided. The same individual who had before removed the apprehensions of the brethren at Jerusalem, is now providentially placed at Antioch to prepare his way. Barnabas conducts him thither from the contemplative retirement which he had sought in his native city; and (at the express instance of the Holy Spirit) accompanies him thence to Cyprus, his own native land.

The period of their subsequent dispute and separation marks still more strongly the hand of Divine Providence in the conduct of these nicely-adjusted movements. The sharp contention which sprung up between them, arose, it is most remarkable, at the very moment in which they were about to renew their common progress, and to retrace their former steps. "And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." The inference is plain. The faith and apostleship

of Saint Paul were no longer matter of question : they were known throughout these parts, not by report or hearsay, but by the living fruits of his personal ministry and labours. The friendly offices of Saint Barnabas, consequently, were no longer needful. I shall only remark further, that their parting appears to have taken place in good time. For the yielding or temporizing conduct of Saint Barnabas at Antioch, which is mentioned by Saint Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, sufficiently instructs us, that *he* was not master of that uncompromising firmness, which alone could qualify him to be the equal fellow-labourer of the Apostle of the Gentiles.

In Saint Paul, then, alone, as I have already observed, was *perfectly* united, the character of the Evangelist with that of the Apostle.

The fruits of the union, in his person, of these distinct offices, are visible, 1. in the extent, 2. in the variety, and 3. in the wisdom, of his ministerial labours. In each of these particulars, I shall proceed briefly to show (in conformity with the confession 1 Cor. xv. 10.), that the single labours of Saint Paul exceeded in fruitfulness the united labours of his brethren the twelve Apostles.

I shall preface my observations under this head, with a remark of a general nature, drawn from a

plain circumstance of fact, which will apply to the whole of the foregoing particulars. The Providence of God has so ordered it, that what we know relative to the ministerial labours of the twelve Apostles, is but little and imperfect, in comparison with what has been authoritatively made known to us respecting the ministerial labours of Saint Paul. Now, what more safe or natural account can be rendered of this remarkable fact, than that which this holy Apostle has himself left on record, namely, that he "laboured more abundantly than they all?"

The justness of this statement I have undertaken to exemplify, 1. in the extent of his ministerial labours. The extent of Saint Paul's labours is matter of sacred history: matter so ample, that, in the historical point of view, I must content myself with observing, that his apostolic course included by far the greater portion of the Roman world. But there is another light in which we may view the labours of Saint Paul, which will enable us more compendiously to judge of their extent, in comparison with those of his fellow-Apostles. You will notice, that one distinctive sign and function of the apostolic office appears to have been, the charge of addressing Epistles to the Churches. This appears, 1. from the occurrence

of the apostolic title as the seal of its authority, on the front of almost every Epistle; and 2. from the consideration that the whole of the Epistles of the New Testament were written by Apostles. In this point of view, the canon of the New Testament becomes a measure of the labours of the entire body. In this canon, apart from two of the Gospels, the Apocalypse, together with seven short general Epistles, forms the portion of "the twelve;" while fourteen letters addressed to specific churches, or heads over churches, by the hand of Saint Paul, occupy nearly a third part of the whole sacred volume.

What I have to remark in the next place, is not less important. Of the eight Epistles, which have been left after them by elder members of the Apostolic College, five, written by Saint Jude and Saint John, belong to a later period, and to new circumstances, of the Church; three only (the Epistles of Saint Peter and Saint James) were contemporary with the ministry, and with the Epistles of Saint Paul. From the contents of those Epistles may clearly be inferred, the superior extent of the ministry of the Apostle of the Gentiles. The two Epistles of Saint Peter, addressed (as I have already noticed) to the churches of the lesser Asia which had been founded by Saint Paul, discover in

every verse his familiarity with the writings, and his desire to enforce the ministry, of the latter Apostle. While the truly catholic Epistle of Saint James is manifestly intended to correct the erroneous doctrine concerning faith, to countenance which the writings of Saint Paul had been violently wrested, by unskilful and unstable interpreters of the holy Scriptures.

That such was the object of Saint James can, I think, be satisfactorily proved from a well-known passage of Saint Peter's second Epistle. If the former letter of this holy Apostle affords striking inward marks of his familiar acquaintance with the writings of Saint Paul, the place which I now refer to in his second general Epistle, establishes the inference suggested by those marks in so many words. It will prove more than this: if (as I believe) it contains an intimation, that, at the date of Saint Peter's second letter, an authorized collection of the Epistles of Saint Paul was already circulated throughout the churches, as the rule of their living, and the standard of their faith. I shall leave the passage of Saint Peter to answer for itself, both with respect to the evidence which it may afford upon these latter points, and to the light which it throws upon the object of the Epistle General of Saint James. "Even," saith the holy Apostle,

“as our beloved brother Paul, also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also *in all his epistles*: In which are some things hard to be understood; which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also *the other Scriptures*, to their own destruction.”

With a remark connected with the date of this piece, I shall close what I have to offer under the present head. The second epistle of Saint Peter was written about the year of our Lord sixty-five; and, as the holy Apostle acquaints his readers in the first chapter, was written on the eve of that final act of suffering for Christ's name's sake, which had been foreshown him by his Divine Master. At this season, the latest care of the patient martyr, at the close of his last earthly labour for the Church of God, is to set his apostolic seal and testimony to the superior ministry of his fellow-labourer in the Gospel, and his beloved brother in Christ: upon the ministry of Saint Paul, his fellow-Apostle, at this time (as is generally understood) his fellow-prisoner also, and, not improbably, his partner in death.

2. The variety of Saint Paul's labours is, in a great degree, to be measured by their extent: their superior extent I have inferred chiefly from considerations connected with the writings of his

brother Apostles: in exemplifying, specifically, the greater variety of his labours, I shall confine my observations principally to his own. In the first place, it is obvious to remark, from the number of Saint Paul's Epistles, from their titles, and from the diversity of their contents, the variety of national and religious habits, prejudices, and opinions, which the holy Apostle had to contend with, or to reconcile. The Gentile, with the Jew: the bondsman, with the free: the savage of Scythia, with the haughty citizen of Rome: the rude barbarian, and the polished Greek: — all these were to be united in the one “new man;” all to be melted together into the obedience of the Gospel of Christ!

This was the Apostolic vocation of Saint Paul. This was that appointed calling to fulfil which, he was “made all things to all men,” * all things, that is, which consisted with his and their salvation, “that he might by all means save some.”

A single instance will suffice to illustrate the view which the foregoing summary presents, of the diversified variety of the Apostle's labours. The pregnant and profound Epistle to the Church of Ephesus, together with the Epistles to the brethren of the Churches of Philippi and Colosse,

* *Σμικρὸς ἐν σμικροῖς, μέγας ἐν μεγαλοῖς.*
PIND. *Pyth. Carm.* iii.

was written, it is well known, during Saint Paul's first imprisonment at Rome; was written, while, under the eye of the emperor, and under the ward of his guards, the holy Apostle, in the capital, in the court, in the palace itself, of Cæsar, published that Gospel for which he was in bonds. At the very moment, when, in the midst of these restraints and occupations, he is engaged in strengthening, by his apostolic letters, the brethren and his Divine Master's cause throughout Macedon and the lesser Asia, he has the heart, and he makes the leisure, in his Epistle to Philemon, to plead, as never such a cause before or since was pleaded, the cause of the penitent Onesimus, an offending slave.

If we desire further exemplification of the variety of Saint Paul's labours, we need only to bear in mind, that he who had preached "Jesus and the resurrection," on the hill of Mars, at Athens, proclaimed "Jesus and the resurrection," also, at Jerusalem, in the temple; that he, whose plainness of speech met the understandings of the rude inhabitants of Lystra, bore, with eloquence irresistible, the name of "the Lord Jesus," before Roman proconsuls, and kings; and lastly, that the writer who addressed himself, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to the Jewish brethren of the Churches of Jerusalem and Judea, was the same (the Apostle

not of the Jews but of the Gentiles), who wrote Epistles to the Churches of Ephesus, of Philippi, of Corinth, and of Rome.

3. The superior wisdom of Saint Paul's ministry is the last topic of discourse. The superiority of the Apostle of the Gentiles, in this respect, over his fellow-Apostles, might justly be inferred, at the first view of his providential allotment, both from the critical nature of his office, and from the signal manner of his call. "The twelve" were chosen for this trust by their Divine Master, while he yet ministered on earth; Saint Paul alone was called to the apostleship by his glorified Redeemer. The dignity of his office was every way conformable to the signal and significant manner in which he was chosen. In virtue of his office, Saint Paul was placed upon ground, which would necessarily bring the authority of his judgment into the balance, against the united judgment and authority of his elder brethren. His judgment was brought to this trying test in various instances; and, in every instance, it prevailed. Saint James and the Council of Jerusalem bowed to his superior wisdom. Saint Peter and Saint Barnabas were silent at its rebuke. Let us not wrong the first of the Apostles. Saint Peter was not silent. With that lowliness of spirit, which had its rise within him from the moment of

his fall, and which shone so eminently throughout his after life, this holy Apostle, in the passage of his second Epistle to which I have already referred, bears a parting testimony to the wisdom, which had rebuked him to the face: "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom," that is, the superior wisdom, "given unto him, hath written unto you." It should be remembered, in this connection, that, amongst the faithful whom Saint Peter here addresses, are, in all likelihood, to be numbered the members of the Churches of Galatia; in his Epistle to which Churches it is, that Saint Paul relates the painful circumstances of his controversy with Saint Peter, and how, in the neighbouring city of Antioch, he "withstood him to the face."

In the historical analysis of Saint Paul's life and ministerial labours, which has been attempted in the present and the two preceding discourses, it has been my leading object, to trace in the sacred records, and to point out, the gradual and progressive operations of the grace of God, in forming the character of the Apostle of the Gentiles: beginning, as those operations have been proved to have begun, at the impressible period of childhood, and (however, during a middle season, held in abey-

ance by Jewish prejudices, and by the predominating influences of a high and impatient temper) still keeping pace with his advancing years.

With reference to the initial stages of this progress: to the silent workings of God's Holy Spirit on the childhood, and on the youth, of his chosen servant, in the first of these discourses I invited special attention, 1. to the various preparatory circumstances, rather we will say, the Providential disposals, which, in so remarkable a manner, united to secure to the youthful Saul the happiest, at once, and the most healthful training, which, amidst the fullest and most favourable opportunities, Judaism, in the exercise of its highest influences, could supply; and 2. to the several corresponding indications, in what has been made known to us of the moral character of this eminent individual previous to his conversion, — indications which, to say the least, sufficiently instruct us, that the singular advantages of his early institution had in no wise been allowed to escape unimproved.

In my second discourse, which treated specifically of the personal character of Saint Paul subsequent to his conversion, — at a period, that is, in the Apostle's life when the influences of the Spirit of God had become permanent, and openly

ascendant in their operation, my chief study lay in the selection of certain appropriate illustrations of the force and fruitfulness with which those Divine influences acted, thenceforward, on the holy Apostle's mind and heart; both in removing or regulating whatever, in the natural cast of his temper, was found at variance with the meekness and forbearance which were in Christ Jesus; and in bringing to maturity all the other leading qualities and characteristics of true holiness, in the growth and culture of which, Saint Paul became pre-eminently the imitator of his Divine Master.

The present discourse, which relates exclusively to "the character of Saint Paul's ministry," abounds equally in exemplifications of the power and fruitful efficacy of God's assisting grace: of that Divine principle in virtue of which the Apostle of the Gentiles, as he has in the text informed us, laboured more abundantly than all his brethren. Those exemplifications, too numerous to be severally adverted to, too uniformly obvious to admit of partial observation, I would leave without comment to your own reading and reflection. Always remembering, that, while none can hope to emulate the ministry, all may study to copy the example of Saint Paul: that while none can be what he

was in his office as an Apostle, all, by the same grace of God, may learn to become like him, in his Christian character, as a man. For to every one of us he speaks in his exhortation to the Christians of Corinth: "Be ye followers of me, as I am, also, of Christ."

SERMON IV.

SAINT PAUL BEFORE ROMAN GOVERNORS.

ACTS, ix. 15.

“ The Lord said unto him, Go thy way : for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.”

THE Apostolical commission of Saint Paul consists (as on previous occasions I have observed), of three heads. “ He is a chosen vessel unto me,” said our Blessed Lord to Ananias of Damascus, “ to bear my name, 1. before the Gentiles, 2. and kings, 3. and the children of Israel.” In the last discourse, which treated of the fulfilment of this commission as illustrating, in the conduct of his apostolic labours, the power of the grace of God, I confined myself to the first and third of those heads ; to a summary view of the general operations of Saint Paul’s ministry, amongst the Gentiles, and the children of Israel.

In this, and the succeeding discourse, I purpose to consider its fulfilment in the remaining

branch; which empowered the holy Apostle to bear his Divine Master's name "before kings."

In conformity with the prospect held out in this branch of his apostleship, it is related, in the book of Acts, that Saint Paul, on several independent occasions, was introduced to personal conferences with the representatives of Cæsar, who exercised the "Jus regium" in various provinces of the Roman Empire. Saint Luke records those interviews in the order of their occurrence as follows.

1. That with Sergius Paulus, the Proconsul of Cyprus. 2. That with Gallio, the Proconsul of Achaia. 3. The interviews with Antonius Felix, the Procurator of Judea. 4. That with Porcius Festus, the successor of Felix. And 5, the memorable conference with Festus and king Agrippa.

I shall treat of these several interviews, as nearly as possible, in the order in which they stand in the book of Acts.

The present subject coincides essentially with the subject of the preceding discourse, in the illustrations which it supplies of the influences of Divine grace on the ministerial character of Saint Paul. The several recorded appearances of this Apostle before Roman viceroys, abound with happy and fruitful exemplifications of such qualities of heart, and such a temper of mind, as the grace of God, in

its highest influences, could alone give birth to. His righteous boldness, and prudent self-control; the dignity of his silence, the mingled decision and delicacy of his speech; the judgment which he exercises, in measuring the proper demands of each individual occasion; the wariness with which he suits his topics of address, to the characters of the persons, and to the circumstances of the time and place; the wisdom with which he awaits the rise of opportunity, and the energy with which he seizes on the favourable moment;—these commanding features are united and matured in the ministerial character of the Apostle of the Gentiles (as exhibited throughout the interviews in question) in a measure and extent, which no power inferior to the omnipotent power of the grace of God could effect, in unfolding the highest qualities and capabilities of the human mind and heart.

While, however, the present subject agrees with the subject of the preceding discourses, in illustrating the fruitful influences, on Saint Paul's ministerial character, of the assisting grace of God, the mode of treating it is, at the same time, rendered unvoidably different, by the very different character of the transactions and results to which it relates. In my last discourse, we have seen the ministry of Saint Paul uniformly triumphant amongst the Gentiles, and widely ascendant over the Jews.

In the present, we must be prepared to witness a wholly opposite issue: to behold the arrogance of power, the pride of rank, and the deceitfulness of riches, trampling upon the unoffending weakness, the unpresumptuous humility, and the voluntary poverty of the Gospel of Christ, in the person of the chief of his Apostles.

In the case of Sergius Paulus, the Proconsul of Cyprus, there occurs a solitary exception to this representation of the general issue of Saint Paul's recorded conferences with the provincial representatives of the *Cæsars*. The conference which terminated in the conversion of that noble Roman, is the earliest of the interviews under consideration which Saint Luke has noticed; and meets his readers at the entrance of this Evangelist's relation of the Acts of the Apostle of the Gentiles.

As, however, an account of this nature must be peculiarly obnoxious to the suspicions of infidelity, whether genuine or affected, I shall reserve Saint Luke's narrative of the interview with Sergius Paulus for separate consideration; and shall confine myself, in the first instance, to an examination of the remaining interviews, which, according to the same sacred writer, terminated without any successful issue.

The treatment of this part of our subject is unavoidably connected with the consideration of

an objection (presumed, we must conclude, to be not highly favourable to the repute of Christianity), which has been much in the mouths of a certain class of speculative men: and which, with his usual eloquent and dexterous ambiguity, has been repeatedly brought forward by the sceptical historian of Rome, especially in the notorious fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of "The Decline and Fall."

It is my purpose to animadvert on some passages of this insidious writer, in considering the sceptical imputation to which I allude.

It can hardly be necessary to observe, that infidel writers, in general, have been fond of adverting to the *obscurity*, which (as they would represent) characterized the Church of Christ, and its members, at least during the first two centuries of the Christian era.* Not only have the original promulgators of the Gospel, and their immediate disciples, been treated, by the majority of those speculatists, as obscure, illiterate, and vulgar men; but the spirit of scepticism has industriously cherished the dying embers of this reproach, to a period almost so low down as the age of the

* See Mr. Gibbon's notice of the congregation of St. Cyprian (A. D. 246—258). "A congregation, however *obscure* or despised by the world," &c. *Decl. and Fall*, vol. ii. c. xv. pp. 352, 353. Edit. oct. Lond. 1802.

first Christian Emperor*; when the edicts of Constantine, and the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the State throughout the Roman world, finally extinguished all remnant of colour for such an imputation.

If the Christian apologist urges, in reply to this objection, that "it is explicitly declared, in the original annunciation of the Gospel, that 'not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called;' that the result objected, consequently, is only answerable to the Providential design, and to the prophetic anticipation;" The sarcastic insinuation of the sceptic is immediately at hand: namely, that "The result might naturally have been anticipated, and the answer prospectively provided, as common prudence might teach even ordinary men, under the circumstances of the first Christians, to anticipate and provide."

If, on the other hand, the front of the objector's reflection be fairly met: if it be alleged that, "in the extent which the infidel dreams of, the case is not so: that not only the earliest records of ecclesiastical history disprove the assertion, but that, in the original documents of our holy re-

* "The Pagans were incensed at the rashness of a recent and *obscure* sect." *Decl. and Fall*, vol. ii. c. xvi. p. 460. (A.D. 284—303.)

ligion, the books of the New Testament, are contained irrefragable proofs, that 'this thing was not done in a corner;'—that, in the Gospel history, are preserved the names of kings, of proconsuls, and of others of the prime nobility of Rome, who were amongst the hearers, the favourers, and even the converts of the Apostle of the Gentiles." The rejoinder of the unbeliever is still in readiness. "Is it well," he will say, "is it the part of prudence, to rest your vindication on *ex-parte* evidence? Men have not commonly been found disposed to put the worst face on a favourite cause. It requires surely no very profound insight into the weaknesses of human nature to authorize the conjecture, that, with their own history in their own hands, the first teachers of Christianity would be likely to feel the expediency (an expediency which the discouraging circumstances of their situation could hardly fail to suggest) of recommending, under the cover of some such judicious colouring, their religion and themselves to the easy credulity of the people."

This representation of the light in which the sceptical mind will be disposed to view *all* arguments in favour of Christianity, which are founded solely on Christian testimonies, has, I trust, been made with candour and fairness. If the correct-

ness of the representation be unquestioned, we are entitled to require of the sceptical objector, that he shall maintain his position on the specific ground, on which the foregoing popular cavils wholly rest, viz. that the foundations of Christianity may have been laid in fraudulent design; together with the unavoidable consequence, namely, that such relations of an opposite character as occur in the book of Acts, may, with a strong degree of probability, be accounted *misrepresentations* of dishonest and designing men.

I state this inference to be unavoidable, because the accounts which are here supposed to be brought into question, relate to things purporting to be plain historical facts, the truth or falsehood of which must have been fully known to the relater (since Saint Luke professes to have been intimately conversant with the persons and scenes which he describes), and in the framing of which, consequently, *enthusiasm* could have had no part.

The only legitimate principle, then, on which the unbeliever can argue against the credibility of this particular branch of Saint Luke's narrative, in the book of Acts, is,—that the representations in question may have been the offspring of *fraudulent design*. With which foundation of sceptical cavil in our view, I shall proceed briefly

to examine the several narratives, which are found in the Acts of the Apostles, of interviews^oalleged, by the sacred writer, to have taken place, between the Apostle of the Gentiles, and presiding authorities of the Roman Empire. Whatever may be the amount of the sceptic's incredulity, the *internal* evidences of truth or falsehood must still remain fairly open to discussion: and on the ground of the internal evidences, the Christian advocate may ever cheerfully accept the challenge of the unbeliever, both with regard to the point immediately at issue, and to every other historical particular in the New Testament.

In prosecuting this investigation, we must be mindful, that in whatever degree we may be enabled to vindicate the Gospel history from aspersion, respecting the qualifications of its first promulgators, and the rank in society of some, at least, amongst its first Gentile hearers, favourers, and converts; in a still greater degree we vindicate (while so doing) the ecclesiastical history of the first three centuries, from liability to similar depreciatory insinuations: since whatever can be *made good* respecting the promulgation and reception of Christianity, at the period of its institution, *must*, the infidel himself being the judge, *stand good* in a constantly increasing degree,

respecting the promulgation and reception of Christianity in after times. The infidel, whatever may be the ground on which he rests his objections, will not be likely to maintain, that, at any period of the first centuries of the Christian era, the religion of Christ had sunk beneath the level of its lowly origin. On the contrary, it is the principle and the practice of infidelity to maintain, that Christianity was unintermittingly progressive. "A pure and humble religion," observes the historian of the Roman Empire, "gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and *obscurity*, derived new vigour from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banners of the cross, on the ruins of the capitol."

Now, in illustration of "the silence and obscurity" which, according to Mr. Gibbon, thus uniformly characterized the early progress of Christianity, and which, by strict parity of reasoning, must have been eminently characteristic of its first promulgation, it appears, on the face of the sacred history, that Saint Paul, on various occasions, preached the Gospel before personages of the first distinction in the Roman Empire. If the attempt be made to throw suspicion on these parts of Saint Luke's narrative, as the representations of proselytes and partisans, in their own behalf; the ob-

jection, from the plain historical nature of the alleged transactions, not only implies, but is inextricably implicated with this consequence, that the statements in question shall be found to be, what the uniform experience of mankind teaches us, that the representations of interested and unprincipled partisans invariably have been, on the whole, obviously advantageous to the cause, which, according to this hypothesis, they were *fabricated* to countenance. If men make stories, they will assuredly make them to their own honour and advantage.

The manner, therefore, in which such conferences are related, and such personages are introduced, in the New Testament, is a fair and unexceptionable touchstone of the merits of the question.

It has been already noticed, that Saint Luke, the personal friend of Saint Paul, and one, also, of the chosen companions of his ministry, has, in the book of Acts, related various interviews which he alleges to have taken place, between the Apostle of the Gentiles, and men who filled some of the highest stations in the provincial empire of Rome. The earliest of those recorded interviews is that with Sergius Paulus, the Roman deputy, or Proconsul of Cyprus, the result of which is thus related: "Then the Proconsul, when he saw that

which was done, believed, being struck with astonishment at the doctrine of the Lord."

It is perfectly easy to foresee the treatment, which such a relation must be prepared to meet with, at the hands of the sceptical inquirer. "What!" he will exclaim, "a Roman magistrate of this rank, the willing hearer, the ready proselyte, of a wandering, schismatic Jew! How convenient a miracle! How creditable a conversion! If a narrative of this stamp bears no internal marks of doubtful credibility, authorizes no suspense of judgment or assent, where," he will ask, "is our credulity to have an end, or our scepticism a beginning?"

As it would be to little purpose we should undertake, by reasoning with the unbeliever upon ordinary grounds of historical truth, the defence of a narrative which thus crosses the whole grain and spirit of unbelief, I shall simply require from the objector, what, in common fairness, he cannot withhold, — his own idea of the reception, that the doctrine of a wandering Jewish schismatic would be likely to experience, from the chief magistrate of a Roman province. A sketch of this nature has been drawn to our hand, by the author of "The Decline and Fall." "The provincial governors," Mr. Gibbon informs his readers, "declared them-

selves ready to listen to any accusation, that might affect the public safety ; but as soon as they were informed, that it was a question not of facts, but of words, a dispute relating only to the interpretation of the *Jewish laws* and prophecies, they deemed it unworthy of the majesty of Rome seriously to discuss the *obscure* differences that might arise among a *barbarous* and *superstitious* people. The innocence of the first Christians was protected by *ignorance and contempt*; and the tribunal of the pagan magistrate often proved their most assured refuge against the fury of the synagogue."

In this passage, we have undoubtedly a well-sustained portraiture of the severe dignity and indifference of Rome. And whence, I will ask, is derived this cutting and contemptuous representation? From the history of Tacitus? From the Lives of Suetonius? From the epistles of Pliny? From the pages of Celsus, of Porphyry, or of Julian? In these quarters, his readers would seek its origin in vain. If we desire to inspect the authorities of the sceptical historian, we must turn to a source, to which here, indeed, for his own purpose, he readily refers; but which the fastidious scrupulosity of scepticism would compel him to disallow, as adequate authority, in every instance where its testimony bears favourably on the Chris-

tian cause, — to the candid narrative, namely, of the sacred historian, in the book of Acts. Let us turn to the plain, unvarnished relation, which the holy Evangelist has given of the interview to which the historian of the Empire here refers. It will then remain for us to judge how far, in the instance of the Proconsul of Cyprus, the testimony of that sacred writer can be justly liable to question or discredit, whose integrity, in the parallel instance of the Proconsul of Achaia, has left so advantageous a record with the enemies of the Christian faith.

“ And when Gallio was the Proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and led him to the judgment-seat, saying, This man persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of criminal offence, or of wicked atrocity, O ye Jews, then were it reasonable that I should tolerate you: but if it be *a question about a word*, and names, and *your law*, look ye to it, for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drave them from the judgment-seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat. *And Gallio cared for none of those things.*”

Every mark of truth which the spirit of scepticism might find wanting in the narrative of Saint Paul's reception by Sergius Paulus, — in the foregoing account of his appearance before Gallio we find abundantly supplied : — the stern indifference of the Roman judge ; the equal portion of disregard meted out to each of the parties, — contemptuous repulse for the accusers, and more contemptuous neglect of the accused. This relation, accordingly, is greedily adopted by the historian ; while he has prudently suppressed any notice of a relation of an *opposite tendency*, which occurs in the same book of sacred history, namely, Saint Luke's account of the memorable conference, which terminated in the conversion of the Roman Proconsul of Cyprus.

Such, in almost every similar instance, is the *candour* of the anti-christian mind. The sceptical philosopher will readily accept, as safe historical documents, those passages of Scripture, which he conceives calculated to throw discredit or contempt on the cause of infant Christianity. Wherever, on the other hand, it discloses evidences of an opposite complexion, the sacred volume, viewed as a source of historical authority, has, in the unbeliever's estimate, no place. It is dangerous, however, to play with truth ; for truth may not

with impunity be lightly handled. Whoever partially adopts a record, as credible evidence, wherever it appears to meet, or countenance, his own sentiments and views, becomes, in consequence, a sure, though involuntary, witness to the credibility of the whole. In the instance before us, thus the case stands. The historian of the Roman Empire builds, on the sole authority of the Acts of the Apostles, his statements of the contemptuous treatment which the first teachers of Christianity experienced from the provincial magistrates of Rome: by which procedure he permanently builds up against himself the authority of the same Christian record, as to the *opposite* account which it contains of the honourable reception of Saint Paul by the Proconsul of Cyprus.

In Saint Luke's narrative of what took place before the tribunal of Gallio, the authority of the Evangelist stands unimpeached; his testimony being, in this instance, recognized in the most unexceptionable quarter for such a recognition,—the page of infidelity,—as competent historical evidence of the matter of fact.

The conference which is next taken notice of in the book of Acts, is there represented to have been of a more decorous and deliberative character. On this occasion (according to his biographer),

Saint Paul is publicly accused, in due legal form, by the Jewish Sanhedrim; and publicly defends himself, in a set speech, before the tribunal of Antonius Felix, the Roman Procurator of Judea. Here, then, is a case in which the honest and unaffected inquirer into the evidences of Christianity may fairly assert his claim, to try the fidelity of the narrative by such principles of criticism, as are considered approved touchstones of historical accuracy and good faith; and here, I must be allowed to add, the most disingenuous and sharp-sighted sceptic will look in vain for a flaw, either in the conduct of the interview, or in its result. Prepared by the letter of the commandant at Jerusalem, as to the nature and amount of the accusations against the prisoner, Felix hears out, with placid indifference, the criminations of Tertullus, and the apology of Saint Paul. The most tyrannical and licentious of the freedmen of Claudius Cæsar, he yet (having here no important personal interest to bias his decision) respects the equal justice of the Roman law: "When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will make myself master of your case," is his calm dismissal of the cause.

This relation, therefore, from the character of the internal evidences, supplies a fresh example

of unimpeachable integrity in the history of Saint Luke. Whatever end may appear to have been aimed at in the speech of the Apostle, no further impression than one *rather* in favour of the innocence of the accused in the eye of the Roman law, is related to have been produced on the mind of his judge. "But," it may be objected, "is this statement a fair and impartial representation of the result of Saint Paul's intercourse with Felix? So far as the first interview is concerned, it may be true that nothing appears in the Evangelist's narrative to authorize suspicion. But the whole case is plainly not yet before us. The Evangelist's relations of the succeeding conferences with this proconsul remain to be examined. And it is obvious that, in his account of Saint Paul's next interview with Felix, in the verses immediately adjoining the place which has just been cited in proof of the impartiality of the history, there occurs a testimony of a very opposite kind. For, of this same Felix presently we read, that 'he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, Felix trembled.' Does such a context admit of being urged as a specimen of unquestionable impartiality? Can a statement like this last be received

by reflecting minds without prudent hesitancy and caution ?”

I answer, that, so far, the ground of objection would be reasonable ; and that if we could consent to suspend all further inquiry here, then the argument of the sceptical objector might stand fair and good. Let us, however, look yet a little onward, and, in the verse which immediately follows the foregoing quotation, and which concludes the holy Evangelist’s notices of the interviews of Saint Paul with Antonius Felix, we find a comment on the conduct attributed to this procurator by the author of the Acts, which reflects back with the resistless force of truth on the entire of Saint Luke’s narrative. I refer to the *motive* which the sacred writer assigns for the above-mentioned novel and singular procedure of the unprincipled, profligate governor of Judea. “He hoped, also, that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him ; *wherefore* he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.”

Let us only consider this passage with care ; and when we shall have so done, let us ask ourselves whether the avowal which it contains be compatible with the existence of design ? whether, if Saint Luke had written (to put no stronger supposi-

tion) under the ordinary influences of party bias, such an avowal would be likely to have a place in his text? Reason and common sense will tell us, that an avowal like this is wholly incompatible with the supposition of design; that, in the narrative of the advocate of a party, it could not have a place. For let us once admit, in any shape, the idea of design, and one or other of these inferences will inevitably follow: either Saint Luke *fabricated* his narrative of the interviews with Felix, with the intention of gaining advantage, or at least of doing credit, to the Christian cause; or he so shaped and coloured his accounts of *real* interviews, as to render them subservient to the interests and honour of Christianity. In *the first* case, the statement respecting Felix could not have existed; in *the second* case, all mention of the Procurator's *motive* would have been studiously suppressed. Saint Luke's statement of this motive, "he hoped, also, that money should have been given him of Paul,"* so wholly nullifies the apparent tendency of every circumstance in the preceding context, which may bear an aspect favourable to the repute of the Gospel, that no way of escape remains from the conclusion upon which the candid inquirer is forced. The con-

* See note at end.

clusion is simply this: that the Evangelist's narrative of the interviews with Felix, is a faithful and exact relation of historical facts.

In his account of the occurrence, Saint Luke has laid open the secret motives which influenced the conduct of Felix throughout his intercourse with Saint Paul. Now, as a fresh mark of the integrity of the sacred writer, in this part of his narrative, it is deserving of every attention, that the motives which he ascribes to this procurator are perfectly in keeping with his known character and habits. For, to an extent that knew no limits, this heartless tyrant was mercenary; in a measure that respected no sanctions, he was mean. Justice, mercy, law, religion, were with him, indifferently, the pliant tools of inflexible avarice. No circumstances of innocence, of poverty, or of destitution, could shield the captive from his unrelenting grasp. From the rich he would wrest his riches; from the poor and forsaken, what he had. This is no imaginary character: it is after the portraiture of a great master: "Antonius Felix," observes Tacitus, "throughout an unbounded course of lust and cruelty, exercised the jurisdiction of a sovereign, with the soul of a slave."

But was this, it may still be asked, the cha-

racter or spirit *to tremble* before the preaching of an unbefriended Jewish captive? *Yes*, it is replied, for the inquirer surely has not yet to learn, that a conscience laden with crimes is a frail protection against the heart-searching truths and terrors of religion. Where adultery, murder, and unbridled rapine, were the inmates, righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, urged by the unshrinking fidelity of Saint Paul, might well shake, for the moment, the confidence even of him, who listened to the intrepid confessor only in the hope of gain. For that moment alone, the Procurator's confidence was shaken. During two years (the remaining term of his government), he holds the Apostle in chains: and, unto the last, true to the dark character which his countryman has drawn, when recalled, at length, to answer for the crimes preferred against him, he would appease with the offering of an innocent victim, the clamours of an injured, outraged people: "And Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound."

Such was the final issue of Saint Paul's conferences with Antonius Felix; such the effects of the Apostle's awakening eloquence, and such the fruits of the Roman Procurator's unmanly fears: — an issue which seals every particular in Saint

Luke's narrative of those conferences, with the characters of nature, and of truth.

Porcius Festus, the successor of Antonius Felix in the government of Judea, is the last Roman magistrate before whom, in his judicial capacity, the Apostle of the Gentiles is represented, in the book of Acts, to have appeared. We shall have no occasion to investigate the proofs of the sacred writer's integrity in this part of his history; inasmuch as this relation (as well as that of the interview with Gallio) is accepted without reserve by the historian of the Empire; who refers for his vouchers, in support of a passage of "The Decline and Fall" which has been already cited, to "the eighteenth and twenty-fifth Chapters of the Acts of the Apostles,—the behaviour of Gallio, Proconsul of Achaia, and of Festus, Procurator of Judea."

The reception of Saint Paul and his accusers before the tribunal of Porcius Festus is, indeed, quite as calm and unbiassed in Saint Luke's pages, as the scepticism of Mr. Gibbon could desire it should be. The impartial equity, and placid indifference, of a Roman judge, where the matter of accusation related merely "to questions of the Jewish law and prophecies," are legible in every syllable of the brief explanatory statement to King

Agrippa, which the Evangelist ascribes to the Procurator. This statement, however, is the introduction to a further interview, which, both from the character of the Apostle's defence, and from the presence in which this defence was made, demands our special consideration. The apology of Saint Paul before Festus and King Agrippa, which Saint Luke has recorded in the twenty-sixth chapter of the book of Acts, whatever may be the estimate formed of its intrinsic value, is confessedly the most finished vindication of his faith, and the fullest appeal to the hearts and consciences of his hearers, which his biographer represents the Apostle of the Gentiles to have made. Whatever be the merits of the defender or the defence, thus much, at least, is certain, — *he puts forth all his strength.*

The occasion now in question, as described by the Evangelist, was such an occasion as *must* have called forth the Apostle's highest powers. On the one hand, sat the Jewish sovereign of a Jewish land ; on the other, the Gentile governor of Judea. In such a presence, *that man* is alleged to have been permitted to speak for himself, whose commission, and appointed calling, it was, to bear the name of the Lord Jesus, "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." No circumstance of state, or of publicity, is wanting, in Saint

Luke's narrative, to indicate the magnitude of the occasion, or to heighten and animate the scene: "When Agrippa," says the sacred historian, "was come, and Bernice, *with great pomp*, and was entered into the place of audience, *with the chief captains and principal men of the city*, at Festus' commandment, Paul was brought forth."

We must at once perceive how deeply, according to the ordinary rules of human calculation, the interests of Christianity must have been involved in the result of such a conference. If any one moment of his narrative puts the fidelity of the author of the book of Acts to an issue, assuredly we must place that moment here. For *here* the divinely chosen champion of Christianity, alike before Jews and Gentiles, stands committed, in presence of the most dignified and qualified auditory of both denominations, that could be assembled, to augment the triumph, or to aggravate the failure, of the cause which he advocated. If misrepresentation, design, or fraud, be justly chargeable, therefore, against any one particular of Saint Luke's history, they must unquestionably have had much to say in the construction of the Evangelist's narrative of this final interview of Saint Paul with the constituted authorities of Judea: a narrative, in which are thus brought

together almost every conceivable circumstance and consideration, which, humanly speaking, could make a successful result desirable for the honour, and an unsuccessful result prejudicial to the interests, of the rising faith.

It would be worse than affectation, to treat, for argument sake, the Evangelist's account of the conference of Saint Paul with Festus and King Agrippa, on the assumption of its being a wholly fictitious narrative. Had not Mr. Gibbon's unqualified adoption, as historical vouchers, of two relations, from the pen of Saint Luke, of similar interviews, already removed any occasion for employing, for our present purpose, such a mode of reasoning, the judicial publicity of the conference with Festus and Agrippa would altogether preclude the possibility of our admitting, even for the sake of argument, the supposition that the entire transaction could have been *fabricated* by a confessedly contemporary writer.

Saint Luke's account, therefore, is either a fair statement, or a fraudulent misrepresentation, of a transaction which really took place at Cæsarea. Let us, for the sake of argument, assume the latter to have been the case: and let us soberly reflect what would necessarily be the method adopted by a writer whose object it was to give, to the inci-

dents of a real and known occurrence, a colouring favourable to his own cause? Such a writer, surely, would contrive to insinuate many things, which he might not venture directly to affirm: where prudence might restrain him from openly mis-stating results, the same principle would probably instruct him (as it taught Mr. Gibbon, wherever his purposes were to be served), both to suppress such circumstances as wore a decidedly unfavourable aspect, and to set forth whatever was favourable to the best advantage. But it is certain that a writer of this stamp could have no rational inducement to wind to a high pitch the expectations of his readers, by a circumstantial display of the powers of his favourite advocate, exercised upon the most interesting and important occasion which occurs throughout his history, in order to conduct them, in the end, to the open avowal of a wholly unsuccessful issue.

We shall proceed, now, from this abstract view of the modes of treating a subject which are necessarily connected with the existence of *design*, to the practical consideration of Saint Luke's narrative of the conference of Saint Paul with Festus and King Agrippa. The Evangelist, in his relation of this conference, *has* wrought the expectations of his readers to the highest point; he *has* described

the attendant circumstances in the most animated colours; he *has* displayed the graceful courtesy, the dignified address, the sober, yet impassioned, eloquence of the Apostle of the Gentiles with the happiest effect. And what is, here, the result? The King, the Queen, the Roman Procurator, the chief captains and principal men of the city, all or any of these, converts to the eloquence and to the faith of Saint Paul? We turn with curious scrutiny to the account of the Evangelist. Nothing of this complexion meets the inquirer's eye. Festus listens with astonished, but unshaken incredulity. Agrippa, an enlightened well-read Jew, possessing much of the knowledge, and little of the bigotry, of his countrymen, is surprized into the momentary confession of a partial faith. But no shadow of claim is put forward by the Apostle's biographer to the conversion of a single individual, Jew or Gentile, in the crowded court. The words have hardly died upon his lips, when Agrippa wholly annuls his partial and involuntary confession. He instinctively resumes his magisterial character. And the conference issues in a calm judicial deliberation, regulated by the received usages of the Roman law: "And the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: and, when they were gone aside, they talked

between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. Then said Agrippa unto Festus, this man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar."

Here, then, is a narrative in which, whether it is to be considered as a faithful exhibition, or as a wilful misrepresentation, of the truth of things, Saint Luke has wrought the interest and expectations of his readers to no ordinary height. If the sacred penman, in so doing, has been guilty of misrepresenting the incidents of the occurrence, some object or inducement there *must* have been to give occasion for his departure from historic truth. Either, therefore, we shall find, in the result of the conference, *an adequate object* for studied misrepresentation, or the plea of misrepresentation will die a natural death. I have already pointed out what *was not* the result of the conference of Saint Paul with Festus and Agrippa; it remains only to state what the result of this conference *was*. The statement is a brief one — *the acquittal of the prisoner*. Let common sense pronounce if this result can be received as an adequate object for deliberate misstatement, — for studied and elaborate departure from historical good faith. Is it an object, with a view to which *many* words would be wasted? Is

it an object, for which words could be wasted at all?

It is needless to inquire further after possible objections. For, on the supposition of design entering into the narrative of Saint Luke, no sceptical hypothesis can reconcile a so highly wrought scene and dialogue with so inadequate a result. I shall content myself, therefore, with noticing the following additional mark of the fidelity of the sacred historian. The confession of Agrippa, "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," is the single circumstance of a favourable nature, throughout the entire conference, which Saint Luke has recorded. In thus bringing forward an admission so honourable, both for Saint Paul himself, and for the cause which he advocated, would not a designing writer have studiously suppressed any direct mention of the further conduct of the Jewish prince, a conduct which so completely nullifies the effect of his partial and momentary testimony?

We have now taken a rapid view of the interviews which are related, in the book of Acts, to have taken place between the Apostle of the Gentiles, and personages of elevated rank and station in the Roman Empire, with the exception of a single case. With the sacred historian's narrative

of this solitary exception I shall conclude the present discourse.

The whole of the accounts which have been heretofore examined relate, we have seen, to cases of acknowledged failure. Now, when, in cases of avowed failure, exertions, such as the exertions which we have already noticed, are admitted to have been made, it is reasonable to inquire what, in the pages of an interested partisan, would naturally be the aspect of the single case, in which the labours of his principal actor are represented to have been crowned with success? The writer in whose narrative Felix trembles, Festus listens with undissembled astonishment, Agrippa almost believes, could hardly, it is presumed, want skill or power to throw in correspondent heightening here. If this case be recorded without studied preparation, effort, or detail; with simplicity, ease, and unaffected plainness, what will naturally be the inference? I will repeat Saint Luke's narrative of the interview of Saint Paul with the Proconsul of Cyprus, and leave the judgment to be formed on it to every "honest and good heart." The writer, who is at no pains to set off this conversion, is equally above the sneers and the reasonings of unbelief.

"And when they (Saint Paul and Saint Bar-

nabas) had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus, which was with the proconsul of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man, who called for Barnabas and Paul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to pervert the Proconsul from the faith. Then Saul (who is also called Paul), filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee; and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and, groping round, he sought some to lead him by the hand. Then the Proconsul, when he saw that which was done, believed, being struck with astonishment at the doctrine of the Lord."

The examination of the circumstances of this memorable conversion will form the subject of a future discourse. On the present occasion it remains only for us, my brethren, who believe, humbly to acknowledge and reverently to adore the wisdom and goodness of HIM, who, through his

good Spirit, has vouchsafed us, in his holy word, such triumphant means, both to convince the gainsayer, and to render to every honest and sincere inquirer after "the truth, as it is in Jesus, a reason of the hope that is in us." Amen.

SERMON V.

SAINT PAUL BEFORE ROMAN GOVERNORS.

ACTS, xiii. 12.

“ Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”

In a former discourse upon the principal recorded interviews of Saint Paul with presiding authorities of the Roman Empire, a remarkable contrast has been noticed, between the manner in which Saint Luke relates the several occasions of this nature, in which the ministry of the Apostle of the Gentiles confessedly failed of success, and the manner in which he relates the single conference, in which the preaching of the word to a Roman governor, was followed by his conversion.

In his accounts of the fruitless interviews of Saint Paul, with Felix, with Festus, and with King Agrippa, every thing of pomp and circumstance which might naturally lead the jealousy of scepticism to anticipate a successful issue, is carefully

detailed, as if of felt value and importance to his subject, by the historian. The publicity of the occasions; the majestic state of the Roman tribunals; the rank, variety, and number of the spectators; the speeches of the accusers, and the apologies of the accused; the powerful and persuasive arguments of the great Christian advocate in vindication and assertion of his faith; every particular, in one word, which, to the eye of sober common sense, could make success desirable, and failure prejudicial, to the interest of a cause, is set forth, in Saint Luke's narrative of those fruitless interviews, with scrupulous exactness.

The conversion, on the contrary, of Sergius Paulus, a Roman proconsul, is related by the holy Evangelist in few words, with plain, unconscious simplicity of style.

The strong internal evidences of undesignedness and truth, which are supplied by this contrast, are supported, again, by the weighty consideration, that the fidelity of Saint Luke, in his relations of such of the conferences in question as terminated unfavourably, is acknowledged, on all sides, without hesitancy or reserve. Such unreserved acknowledgment amounts to more than a negative testimony to the general credibility of the Evangelist's narrative. For, every admitted fact con-

tained in those trying touchstones of his good faith, becomes, in virtue of the admission, an independent proof and pledge of his trustworthy fidelity throughout the entire course of the history; and, especially, in his relation of that kindred occurrence, the favourable issue of which is recorded in the text.

In the case of the illustrious convert whose character is the subject of the present discourse, there occurs, however, it must be admitted, one distinguishing circumstance, which, to minds of a sceptical tendency, will necessarily appear a serious counterpoise, to the artless plainness of the sacred historian's narrative of this transaction. In the cases of a similar nature which have been already examined, the Apostle, it may be objected, is uniformly represented to have confined himself to means purely human; while, in the interview with Sergius, recourse is had to miracle. The terms, also, in which Saint Luke describes this conversion, and which would seem to represent the belief of the Proconsul as consequent and dependent on the performance of the miracle, will naturally be thought to add not a little to the force of such an objection.

The inquirer, who honestly desires to satisfy his mind, upon the real amount of the internal

evidence of Saint Luke's fidelity, in this very important passage of his history, will be disposed to do as much justice, in his estimate of this deduction, as the most sceptical objector can desire should be done. It is freely to be conceded, that, so far as the conversion of Sergius Paulus shall appear, on full investigation of the circumstances which attended it, to *depend* upon the alleged miraculous infliction; so far the miracle which Saint Luke states to have been wrought in his presence, must, in fairness, be considered as a counterpoise to the otherwise simple narrative of the successful issue of Saint Paul's conference with this noble Roman. In making this concession, we become plainly entitled to the full weight of the converse inference: namely, that, so far as the conversion of Sergius Paulus to the faith of Christ shall be found to be *independent* on what is miraculous in Saint Luke's narrative, so far, the open, unvarnished simplicity with which this Evangelist relates the whole transaction, accredits his account of the miraculous infliction on Elymas. In other words, if the whole account be artificial, the miraculous part must form an essential and principal ingredient in the design: consequently, whatever marks we discover in the narrative, tending to make the miracle subordinate and unessen-

tial, become so many distinct proofs of undesignedness and fidelity in the relater.

A short analysis of Saint Luke's account of this transaction, will put us competently in possession of the real merits of the case. On referring to the chapter of the Acts in which the relation in question occurs, we may observe a mark of undesignedness in the first sentence. "And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus; which was with the Proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This magistrate called to him Paul and Barnabas, and earnestly sought to hear the word of God." It is obvious, at the first view, that, in this introduction, the conversion is not represented as at all of a difficult nature. Sergius Paulus, a thoughtful inquirer after truth ("an intelligent man," as Saint Luke styles him), had, it appears, like others of his countrymen, extended his inquiries to the religion of the Jews; and was already in habits of familiar conference with a pseudo-prophet of that nation, a dexterous impostor, and a pretender to miraculous powers, when Saint Paul and his companion reached the capital of Cyprus. Whatever advantages, however, this Jew must have possessed towards establishing an ascendancy over the mind of Sergius,

from his being able to blend, with those lying pretensions, the truths of divine revelation; the Roman Proconsul appears to have maintained the character which the Evangelist assigns him. He suspends his judgment; retains his liberty of further inquiry; and, hearing of the arrival in his government of new teachers, of the same nation, and with similar pretensions to those of Bar-jesus, he prudently resolves to obtain a fuller insight into doctrines and claims of this nature, before he would surrender himself to the direction of his Jewish adviser. "He called to him," says the sacred writer, "Barnabas and Paul, and sought earnestly to hear the word of God." It would not be easy to suppose a case of less difficulty. The Proconsul of Cyprus is represented to us as a prepared subject; not a cold and captious speculator, but an honest, diligent, serious inquirer after religious truth. He is already much interested in the religion of the Jews, by such particulars relative to the law of Moses, as he might collect from so imperfect and dubious an interpreter as Elymas. He chooses to acquaint himself with the tenets of the rising sect; and sends, therefore, for Saul and Barnabas, not, like Herod, "as hoping to see some miracle done by them," not, like Felix, as "hoping that money might be given him of Paul," but as

one seeking, honestly and seriously, to "hear the word of God."

As we proceed in the narrative, circumstances appear in the case of this illustrious Roman, which still more strongly mark the independence of his conversion, upon the miracle performed in his presence by the Apostle. From the adjoining context we learn, that Sergius not only sought to hear the word, but that he hearkened, also, to his inspired instructors, in the spirit of belief. This important inference may clearly be drawn from the terms in which the Evangelist relates the opposition which Bar-jesus gave to the teaching of Saul and Barnabas. "But Elymas the sorcerer withstood them, seeking to *pervert* the Proconsul from the faith."

Sergius, it is obvious, was already persuaded by the preaching of the word. The interested and impious Jew interposes to prevent the consequences of this persuasion. To release an honest and *believing* mind from the perplexity which such opposition must naturally have occasioned; and as a just punishment, at the same time, of this reprobate pretender to miraculous powers, the miracle was performed which is thus recorded by Saint Luke. "Then Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all

subtilty, and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord ? And now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist, and a darkness ; and, groping round, he sought some to lead him by the hand."

This part of the narrative gives thorough insight into the guilt of Bar-jesus ; and into the motive, also, and urgent occasion, for the visitation which was inflicted on him. For this impious pretender, it hence appears, was not only an opposer of the Gospel, but a corrupter also of the Law : "Thou enemy," saith the Apostle, "of *all* righteousness, wilt thou not *cease* to pervert the right *ways* of the Lord."

"Then," we read, "the Proconsul, when he saw that which was done, believed, being struck with astonishment at the doctrine of the Lord."

From this plain statement of the case of Sergius Paulus, a consideration arises, which will be found materially to corroborate the marks of truth and undesignedness, which have been already pointed out in Saint Luke's account of his conversion. I allude to the strict conformity observable between the principle on which the miracle, in this instance,

appears to have been wrought, and the principle on which the miracles of our blessed Lord were uniformly performed. *Faith*, we know, was the indispensable pre-requisite to the merciful miracles of Christ Jesus. In his own country, he could do no mighty works, "because of their unbelief." When supplicated for miraculous aid, our Lord prefaces each gracious compliance, with inquiries such as these: "*Believe ye* that I am able to do this?" or, "If thou canst *believe*: all things are possible to *him that believeth*." And, where he wrought any miracles, "*Thy faith* hath saved thee," or, "Great is *thy faith*, be it unto thee according as thou wilt," is his constant language to the objects of his Almighty compassion.

That the Apostles performed their miracles strictly on the same principle, is manifest from the whole tenor of the book of Acts. In the case of the lame man, who sat in the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, Saint Peter declares to the Jews that "his (Christ's) name, *through faith in his name*, hath made this man whole." In the account of the miracle which Saint Paul himself performed, in the course of his first progress, upon the cripple at Lystra, the reason assigned for the miraculous restoration is, that "Paul, looking stedfastly on him, perceived that he had *faith* to be healed."

From the view which has been just taken of the case of Sergius Paulus, we are enabled to infer the operation of the same principle of conduct, in the punishment inflicted on Elymas, by the last-named Apostle. It is plainly *the believing spirit* of the Roman Proconsul, which affords room for the miraculous judgment upon that wicked opposer of the truth.

In the case of the illustrious personage whose character and conversion form the subject of the present discourse, we have now been conducted, by an accurate examination of Saint Luke's narrative, to a conclusion perfectly conformable, indeed, with the analogy of the New Testament, but, *apparently*, quite opposed to the conclusion which the statement of the Evangelist would, at the first view, suggest. For Saint Luke, in the text, *appears* to ascribe the belief of the Proconsul to the performance of the miracle; while a strict inspection of the context is required to arrive at the *real* inference, which *reverses* this order; which places the miracle, in the case of Sergius, precisely on the same footing with the whole of the miracles of the New Testament, making it *the consequence*, and *not the cause*, of his belief. An inartificial conformity of this nature between principle, and action, is no

unimportant argument of the fidelity and truth of the document in which it occurs.

To look back, for a moment, on the ground over which we have passed on a former occasion. Among the recorded conferences of the Apostle of the Gentiles with presiding authorities of the Roman Empire, his interview with the Proconsul of Cyprus furnishes the only instance in which, consistently with the wise economy of extraordinary means so observable throughout the New Testament, room was left for a miraculous interposition, in vindication of the ordinary preaching of the word. In this case, accordingly, and in this alone, we find that a miracle *was* performed. Before Gallio, who "cared for none of these things," the holy Apostle suffers the unbelieving Jews to proceed unmolested in their opposition to the Gospel. Before Felix, an unprincipled, licentious tyrant, the venal Tertullus is left with impunity to play off the hollow sophistries of his art. No visitation is called down from heaven, to convict the gainsayer, or to convince the judge. Before Sergius, on the other hand, a man of a believing spirit and honest mind; a cautious, but diligent and conscientious, inquirer after Divine truth; the impious sorcerer who would oppose himself to *his* conversion, is immediately struck blind.

Saint Luke's account of this remarkable conversion, thus vindicates its fidelity to the fullest extent, in which internal evidence can vindicate historical good faith. The total absence of study and design is, in the first place, made apparent to the reflecting mind, by the brief, unconscious simplicity of the narrative (a simplicity in itself so little calculated to arrest attention, or to produce effect); and this, in a place of the history where, in the apprehension of the sceptical objector, and on the principle itself on which his hesitancy rests, the interests of Christianity must have required that the transaction should be set off to the best advantage. The evidences of historical fidelity which are comprized in this consideration, are confirmed, in the next place, by the establishment of the fact, that *the principle of faith*, in Sergius Paulus, *preceded* the miraculous infliction to which Saint Luke's language would appear, at first view, to attribute his conversion. And, lastly, a conclusive argument of the sacred historian's good faith arises in the existence of internal marks of propriety and fitness (marks not presented on the foreground of the narrative, but resulting from a close critical investigation), which demonstrate the interview with Sergius to have been the single instance, among the recorded conferences of Saint Paul with Roman governors

heretofore alluded to, in which, consistently with the principle which regulated our Lord's miracles, a miracle was called for, or could have been performed.

In treating the present subject, it has been conceded, for the sake of argument, that the expressions of Saint Luke, in the text, would appear, on first view, to represent the judicial miracle as the chief agent in the conversion of the Proconsul of Cyprus. A nearer inspection of this passage will now demonstrate, that the concession was made for the sake of argument only; that the literal purport of Saint Luke's words, taken independently, will lead us precisely to the same conclusion, to which we have been already conducted by the whole bearing of the context; namely, that the faith of Sergius was essentially *independent* of the miraculous judgment, which he had seen visited upon the reprobate Bar-jesus. "Then," says the holy Evangelist, "the Proconsul, when he saw that which was done, believed, being struck with astonishment *at the doctrine of the Lord.*" The preaching of Saint Paul, it is hence evident, had already wrought a perfect work, on the judgment, and in the heart of his noble hearer. The interposition of miracle is permitted only to clear from bewildering perversions a believing mind.

Saint Luke, it is further remarkable, has preserved no record of the peculiar truths or doctrines, which the Apostle taught on this memorable occasion. The character, however, of his illustrious convert, as it may be gathered from the brief notice of him in the book of Acts, will abundantly justify us in concluding, that the discourse of Saint Paul, in this interview, could have been in no wise inferior to any of the discourses which he delivered on similar occasions, and which are extant in the sacred history. If the presence of a kingly court, and of a crowded assembly, with the excitement of mind natural to a man standing publicly on his defence, so strikingly presented in another place of the Acts, were wanting in the instance before us; the powers of the Apostle of the Gentiles, on the other hand, were here called into exercise, by incitements of a calmer nature, indeed, but with him of far more prevailing interest and force. "The right ways of the Lord" were now to be unfolded, not to an injurious, sensual tyrant; not to an openly incredulous, though equitable, judge; not to royalty, well-instructed, indeed, in the truths of the Jewish revelation, but entangled and chained down by this world's most seductive cares; but to a mind, thoughtful, inquiring, and disengaged; honestly

desirous of discovering the truth, willing and prepared by the truth to be made free. Such (from the cursory glimpse which Saint Luke affords of his character), it appears, was Sergius Paulus. And if, before Felix, the Apostle reasoned of his hope towards God, of a resurrection of the dead, of "righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come:" if, before Festus and King Agrippa, he spake at large of the hope of the promise made of God unto the Fathers; of those things which Moses and the Prophets did say should come, — "that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light to the people, and to the Gentiles:" if these truths of Christ's religion were thus poured forth, by its great advocate, into incredulous ears, and indisposed hearts, how profound must have been his reasonings, how profuent his exhibition of the faith, before the enlightened Roman, whose disposition to make inquiry into such matters was previously manifested, by his holding familiar intercourse with a *Jewish* teacher; the manly independence of whose judgment has been evidenced, in the fact of his preserving it unbiassed by the imposing arts of this false prophet; whose earnestness in these researches appeared from his voluntary applica-

tion to Saul and Barnabas, that he might "hear from them the word of God;" and whose honest and good heart, discernible, doubtless, from the first, to the Apostle's experienced eye, approved itself, at the last, in the result recorded in the sacred history.

The Evangelist, indeed, has displayed nothing of the Apostolic counsel and instruction, which such a preparation of mind and heart in his illustrious auditor, would seem imperatively to demand; but he has given his readers an index, which is, at once, faithfully characteristic of the preaching of Saint Paul, and which, at the same time, leaves us free to apply, in the largest way, the analogy of the holy Apostle's known teaching, to this unrecorded discourse. He has told us, that "the Proconsul believed, *being struck with astonishment* at the doctrine of the Lord."

Some grounds of this happy, fruitful astonishment, we can, with safety, collect from the character and conduct of Sergius Paulus, as he is drawn in Saint Luke's narrative. In this brief delineation, it is easily discernible, that the intercourse of the Proconsul with the false prophet Bar-jesus, originated in his sincere and serious desire to inquire after religious truth. The Divine truths of the Mosaic revelation, however

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they might have been darkened and defaced by the lying arts of Elymas, could not, it is obvious, in the hands of a *Jewish* impostor, be altogether perverted or concealed. Even in *his* distorted representations of the Jewish law and prophecies, the honest and understanding mind of Sergius could not fail to discover "dawnings of beams, and promises of day," in comparison with which, the best lights of heathen wisdom would appear gloom and "thick darkness." If, however, a mutilated view, such as Elymas might give, of the Law, the Prophets, and the Almighty God of Israel, could so far interest the thoughts and attention of the Proconsul, as to create (as it undeniably appears to have created), at least, the desire of obtaining further insight into that mysterious dispensation; it is little, surely, to infer, that another order of attention, and far other trains of thought, must have been awakened by Saint Paul, when the hand of this "mighty master" drew back the veil; when, behind the rites and ceremonies, the sacrifices and oblations, the types and shadows of the Jewish law, he disclosed to his illustrious hearer, "God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory;" when, on the promises of Jehovah to the Patri-

archs of old time, he reflected back the life and immortality of the Gospel of Christ; when, from beneath the dark predictions of Moses and the Prophets, he drew forth into the light, opened to the understanding, and brought home to the heart, the sufferings, the dying, and the resurrection from the dead, of the crucified Jesus, of "Him, to whom gave all the Prophets witness." Of these, and of many like topics of discourse, Saint Luke, doubtless, might have told at much length, in recording the interview of Saint Paul with the Proconsul of Cyprus: he has contented himself, however, with the single saying, which includes them all, "He believed, *being struck with astonishment at the doctrine of the Lord.*"

It follows, that the preaching of that religion, which numbered, amongst her earliest Gentile converts, a Proconsul of the Roman Empire, could, in no wise, at the beginning, have been exclusively restricted, either in intention, or in effect, to the illiterate, the vulgar, and the poor; that her first appointed herald amongst the heathen, could have been, in no measure, unqualified for carrying into fulfilment the most arduous branch of his recorded Apostolical commission; that he should bear the name of his Divine Master, "before kings." Whether we contemplate his great natural, or his

greater acquired endowments, Saint Paul, indeed, appears to have been signally entitled to appropriate to himself the noble confidence of the Psalmist, "I will speak of thy testimonies also even *before kings*, and will not be ashamed."

1. Trained in all the learning of the Greeks, as well as of the Jews; uniting the treasures of human science, with the gifts of inspiration; of the Apostle of the Gentiles was eminently true, what has been most justly affirmed generally of the twelve Apostles, — "He was, by infinite degrees, the best informed of all philosophers."

The comparatively rare examples, on the first publication of Christianity to the Gentile world, of heathen converts from the highest walks of life, are perfectly consonant, indeed, with the prophetic declarations of Christ on this head; but, the infrequent occurrence of such conversions, in the Apostolic age, to be accounted for justly, must, it is manifest, be accounted for on very different grounds from the imaginary deficiencies of the first promulgators of the Gospel. The causes, in truth, which checked the progress of Christ's religion in that direction, ceased only when the Empire became Christian; when the invisible, that is, was merged in the visible Church. Until the outward profession of Christianity was thus ren-

dered honourable amongst men, it was to be looked for, as it had been foretold, that the pride of rank, the deceitfulness of riches, and the cares of this life, would prove, to the great proprietors of these things, but too effectual a barrier, against the entrance of a lowly, charitable, self-denying faith.

While such a faith continued unknown, despised, or persecuted by the State, it would evidently require no ordinary predisposing circumstances, to make men in authority Christians. Accordingly, to every conversion of this nature, the particulars of which are related in the New Testament, peculiarly favourable circumstances and dispositions are stated to have prepared the way. The good centurion of our Lord's day was matured, for the manifestation of his believing spirit, by his practical acquaintance with the religion of the Jews, — "He loveth our nation," they said, "and hath built us a synagogue." The treasurer of the Queen of Ethiopia, the convert of Saint Philip, was a pilgrim to the Temple of Jerusalem; and, "returning in his chariot, read Esaias the Prophet." Cornelius, the centurion of the Italian band, was "a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house; which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." And Sergius Paulus was led, by the imperfect instructions of Elymas,

into his voluntary application to Saint Barnabas and Saint Paul.

Thus, in every circumstantially recorded example of such conversions, throughout the New Testament, JUDAISM appears to have formed the connecting link between Christianity and her Gentile converts. The preaching of the Gospel, to the great of those days, seems there alone, but there uniformly, to have succeeded, where an honest and affectionate spirit of inquiry after the truth had made ready and straight the way.

2. The fitness, both natural and acquired, of the Apostle of the Gentiles, to conciliate the attention of men of the world; the ease of his manners, and the politeness of his style; have attracted the notice and admiration of our most accomplished scholars. But these features in the character of Saint Paul, have been seldom more happily expressed, than in the words of a late eminent foreign critic. "His speeches and writings," observes Professor Michaelis, "display, at all times, urbanity and refinement; and it is a remark, which naturally suggests itself in reading his works, that the author united a knowledge of the world, with a cultivated genius: no courtier could have given a more finely turned reply, than Saint Paul, in his answer to Agrippa."

If this character, suggested simply by the perusal of his apologies and letters, be faithful and to the life, its truth must be legible in corresponding facts of sacred history. Some leading facts of this nature are before you in these discourses. But let us now, in conclusion, observe the *incidental* illustrations of the truth and reality of the foregoing sketch, which we meet with in the Acts of the Apostles. In the midst of the tumult at Ephesus, it is observable that the safety of Saint Paul is a subject of interest and anxiety with the nobles who presided over the games held in honour of Diana : “ And certain of the Asiarchs, *which were his friends*, sending to him, besought him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.” During his voyage to Italy, the Apostle appears, from the first day, to have gained so far on the affections of the heathen centurion who had charge of him, that, on their arrival in the port of Sidon, he readily incurred the serious responsibility of suffering his principal prisoner to go on shore without restraint : “ And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and permitted him to go to his friends, and refresh himself ; ” while, in their after progress, in the hour of shipwreck, the stern demands of Roman discipline are forgotten in the generous solicitude of this officer for the preservation of a single cap-

tive: "And the counsel of the soldiers was, that they should kill the prisoners, lest any of them, swimming away, should escape. *But the centurion, wishing to save Paul*, withheld them from their purpose." From the whole of these particulars, we might safely infer, what the Evangelist has been at no pains to record, that it was to the interest which Saint Paul excited, that the sacred historian himself, and his companions were indebted, for the hospitable courtesy shown them by the Roman governor of Melita.

This last incident affords room for an important concluding observation. During his stay with Publius, Saint Paul is represented as having wrought a miracle, which would be more likely, from its interesting the affections, to lead to the conversion of those who witnessed it, than the penal miracle which occurred in the case of the Proconsul of Cyprus: "And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever; to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him." That there were the seeds of faith in these noble Romans, our recollection of the principle which regulated the miracles of Christ and his Apostles, together with the Evangelist's notice of Saint Paul's *praying* in the chamber of the sick man, previous to his performing the mira-

culous cure, will necessarily lead us to conclude. No intimation, however, of this kind is to be found in the narrative of Saint Luke. The letter, on the contrary, of the sacred historian's narrative will authorize rather the conclusion, that the liberal-minded Publius, and his restored father, were left in the state of Gentile darkness in which they had been found.

Let us compare, with the absence in this place of all desire to do credit to Saint Paul's ministry, the marks of undesignedness in earlier portions of Saint Luke's history, which have been pointed out in the course of the last two discourses. The inference is obvious and unavoidable. The holy Evangelist has ended as he had begun. Truth, and truth only, could be the object of such a history; and "the truth as it is in Jesus Christ" shines throughout it to the end.

In the sacred writer's narratives of these transactions, taken as a whole, the degrees of effect are marked out in the proper light and shade, and with the honest definiteness, of truth. Gallio cared for none of these things. Felix trembled, but stood unshaken in wickedness. Festus listened with polite, incredulous indifference. Agrippa is almost persuaded. Publius entertains the shipwrecked prisoner with courteous hospitality; but, so far as the letter of the sacred history informs us to the

contrary, remains in the ignorance of pagan superstition. Sergius Paulus alone is declared a convert: "Then the Proconsul, when he had seen what was done, believed, being struck with astonishment at the doctrine of the Lord."

SERMON VI.

SAINT PAUL BEFORE KING AGRIPPA.

ACTS, xxvi. 28.

“ Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”

THIS remarkable passage of Saint Luke's history opens to the Christian reader a spacious field, both of interest and instruction, as matter of historical inquiry, and of grave and useful practical reflection. As matter of history, it records the involuntary tribute, which a personage of kingly rank, and kingly extraction, a Roman by education and adoption, and a Jew by principle and birth, paid to the persuasive eloquence, and to the enlightening faith of the Apostle of the Gentiles. As subject for reflection, it admonishes every member of God's visible Church,—every man who confesseth the faith of Christ crucified,—of the alarming possibility, that his individual confession may too nearly resemble the confession of King Agrippa; that his personal belief, though neither so sudden in its growth, nor

so short-lived in its continuance, may yet be quite as imperfect in its character, and quite as nugatory in its fruits.

It would be well, indeed, for many who call, and, perhaps, for some who think themselves Christians, if there were no other methods of self-delusion, no other ways of being almost persuaded, of being made Christians by halves, of living in a state of faithless and fruitless conviction, than the way and method which are here exemplified, in the reply and conduct of this Jewish prince.

In the following discourse, I purpose, in the first place, to inquire into the nature and force of the impression, which drew from King Agrippa a public testimony, so favourable to the cause of Christianity, and so honourable to its great Apostle; and, secondly, to consider in what ways numbers who profess themselves disciples of Christ Jesus may, in effect, be only followers and disciples of that mistaken prince; may live almost persuaded, and may die but almost persuaded, to be Christians; and defer their full conviction to a day when there shall be no longer room for repentance, when mercy shall have given place to judgment, and the voice of persuasion to the sentence of righteous retribution.

In order that we may be prepared, in some mea-

sure, to form a correct estimate of the confession which is recorded in the text; of the sincerity with which it was made; and of the nature and force of the impression which produced it; it will be not unsuitable to take some previous notice of the condition, the connections, and the personal character of the King Agrippa who is there spoken of, and of the circumstances under which he addressed himself to Saint Paul, in the language which Saint Luke, in the text, ascribes to him.

Agrippa, as I have already intimated, passed the earlier years of his life at Rome, where, as we learn from Josephus, he lived in habits of the closest intimacy with the emperor Claudius Cæsar. On the death of his uncle Herod, dynast or king of Chalcis, Agrippa was preferred by the friendship of the Roman emperor to the sovereignty of that district. By the favour of Claudius he was again promoted, from this minor government, to the sovereign rule over several considerable districts of Judea, a territory to which the greater part of Galilee, and a portion of Berea were annexed, during the reign of Nero.

King Agrippa was the son of that Herod Agrippa, whose calculating cruelty, whose blasphemous arrogance, and whose humiliating end, are related in the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

It appears, however, that the King Agrippa of whom we here speak, was of a nature and character widely different from that of his father. It might naturally have been expected, that the son of the wanton tyrant, who had been the first to bathe royal hands in Christian blood,—the persecutor of Saint Peter,—the murderer of the holy Apostle Saint James,—that the son of such a father would have imbibed from him an hereditary hatred of the name and followers of Christ. But it was otherwise. Deeply read in the sacred books of the Old Testament; zealous and, for his rank and the age in which he lived, probably conscientious in his attachment to the law of Moses; thoroughly conversant with the sects, customs, institutions, and prejudices of his infatuated countrymen,—Agrippa, withal, seems to have felt and acted towards the first promulgators of the Gospel, with the fairness and liberality of an unprejudiced and upright mind. He desires of the Roman procurator an interview with his prisoner, Saint Paul; certainly with no intention to injure or insult him, for he addressed the Apostle with gentleness, and heard him with courteous attention.

The holy Apostle saw and seized his advantage. He promptly converted his personal defence, into an appeal to the faith and reason of his judge;

and in an address which, for skill, dignity, and feeling, stands unrivalled even in his own inspired page, he generously aimed at the conversion of a prince, who, perhaps, in the next moment, was about to seal his condemnation.

We might collect the deep interest with which the king hearkened, from the affectionate energy with which the Apostle spoke. He was too profoundly skilled in the powers of eloquence, and in the nature of man, to speak with pathos, where he was heard with coldness ; and on no former occasion, excepting in the presence of his own children in the faith, had he suffered himself to be betrayed into a like overflow of heart.

But a still more striking proof, that Agrippa heard with interest, is this, — that he heard in silence. No curious inquiry, no captious remark, no murmur of incredulity, no expression even of surprise, disturbed the current of the Apostle's discourse, while he told the king of his manner of life, his sect, his bigotry, his persecuting zeal, and his miraculous conversion. The grounds of faith in Christ Jesus, the proofs of the fulfilment, in him, of all prophecy, and of the completion of the promise made of God unto the Fathers, were placed in like rapid and masterly succession, by the Apostle, before the king. His reason, his judg-

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ment, his conscience, were convinced; when at length Saint Paul, touching upon a topic which, more than all the other topics of his discourse, he had found the subject of heathen annoyance and derision, — the resurrection from the dead, — the Roman governor, hitherto it would seem suspended between doubt and admiration (for the very terms of his censure are expressive of his respect), was unable longer to keep silence: “And Festus said, with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom, also, I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him. King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”

If, from the circumstances here before us, we proceed to inquire, under what force of impression, and in what frame of mind, Agrippa may be judged to have pronounced this memorable confession, the reason of the case plainly appears to answer thus:—The king had from the outset marked the countenance of the Apostle; the constancy, the more than heroic firmness, with which he stood before

his judges. The righteous freedom, the generous disregard of private safety, with which a prisoner in chains pleaded, not his own cause, but the cause and credibility of his faith, doubtless added much to that weight of argument, and of inspired eloquence, which, at this day, in the silent page of Scripture, carries conviction home to every candid mind. The calm, yet fervent self-possession of Saint Paul, his look, his voice, his words of truth and soberness, surprized, convinced, and overcame the king; insomuch that, forgetful alike of the reserve of his own station, as a sovereign and a judge, and of the presence and opinion of the polite and powerful Roman, he replies to the appeal of the holy Apostle, against the rash judgment of Festus, in the words of the text, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

The impression, however, though strong, was momentary. His attention was gained, his feelings were wrought upon, his judgment was satisfied, but his heart was not changed. A proficient in the study of the Law and of the Prophets, he perceived that Saint Paul had, indeed, proved Christ Jesus to be the Messiah which was to come: but, bred up in the profligate court of his father Herod, or the still more contagious atmosphere of Cæsar's palace; nurtured, from his childhood, amidst the

softness and luxury, and trained in all the pomp and pride, both of Roman, and of Eastern royalty ; Agrippa, probably, was not equally prepared to discern, what interest or concern he could have in the coming of a Messiah, whose ambassador stood before him, a prisoner in bonds.

That prisoner read upon his countenance, the conflict which passed within his breast. He saw, that if the truths of the Gospel had seized upon his royal hearer's understanding, the snares of the world held fixed possession of his heart ; and that while half inclining to yield to his conviction, when almost persuaded to become a Christian, he little knew what a Christian was. They know as little what is true greatness, who can be insensible to the force and feeling of the holy Apostle's reply : "And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am,—except these bonds."

In this way ended this memorable conference. Saint Paul retired to happier labours : of King Agrippa we read no more ; only from the ease with which he presently resumed the place and feelings of a judge, and from the calmness with which he pronounced upon the innocence of the Apostle, it too evidently appears, that, while a

native justice, liberality, and courtesy remained inviolate, all sentiments of a deeper nature were already smoothed away; that the struggles of conscience had subsided, or had been suppressed.

Thus far I have endeavoured to investigate the frame of mind, which is implied in the conduct of Agrippa; and to ascertain the nature and force of the impression, which drew from this mistaken prince the words of the text.

It is my next duty to show in what ways too many in the Christian world may be found like-minded with him. The Christian world, then, that is, the visible Church of Christ, may be viewed as a body consisting of four classes of members. Of the last and lowest of these classes, the ranks are filled by men, who can be accounted Christians in name alone: men, who not only have forfeited the grace, but who have cast from them, also, the blessing, which they had received in baptism; studied or thoughtless unbelievers (the space between these is not great); infidels in their principles, or infidels in their lives.

The class of members next in the ascending order, advances materially on the preceding. The acquaintance of the men who compose it, with the Christian revelation at large, and with the doctrines of the Catholic Church, is sometimes exten-

sive, is commonly respectable. Their outward attention to the discipline and to the duties, which the Christian religion and the Church enjoin, is sufficiently constant and decorous: their inward conviction of the truth and certainty of their faith, if not deeply deliberate, is, at least, decently sincere. It is not, however, until another feature is added to the delineation of this character, that its true key, and capital defect appear. And here lies the prevention which mars all further progress. The members of Christ's visible Church, who constitute the class in question, are disposed to make Christianity what they never found her,—a business of the head, and not a healer of the heart. If therefore their judgments are satisfied, their affections still are unconcerned. If in matters of a moral nature, their conduct be not grossly culpable, in the great matter of Religion, on the other hand (the only source of goodness undefiled), their views, their habits, their consciences are cold.

We pass now to the consideration of a yet higher order of members, in the visible Church of Christ. The individuals who compose it, in this respect rise above the level of the class which has been last described, in that they bring their feelings to the study of their faith: while in this respect they fail in their ascent, and fall below safety,—that

the feelings which they employ in the offices of religion, are the growth, not of indwelling principle, but of occasional excitement. Temporary in their origin, they are temporary, also, in their stay; they pass away and are dried up, like the waters of a river which have been cut off from the source; they stagnate like the life-blood, where it communicates no longer with the heart.

It follows that that indwelling and enduring principle, (the seat and source of all right faith and feeling,) which is none other than a heart impregnated by his Holy Spirit, with the fear, and love, and grace, and goodness of God, is the possession and distinguishing characteristic of those favoured inheritors of their divine Master's name, who are numbered in the highest order; who are altogether Christians, in deed and in truth; who have their treasure in the inner heaven, and whose faith, upon earth, is fruitful in holiness, and in every good word and work.

Thus far, it has been my object, to reduce under distinct heads the various component members of the visible Church of Christ. I shall now proceed to compare the nature and force of the several impressions, which the truths of Christianity would seem to have made upon the several orders of her duly instituted members, which have been thus

briefly marked out, with the nature and force of the impression, which the same heavenly truths, on a first hearing of them, appear to have produced upon the mind of the Royal Jew.

In the first place, then, it is obvious that men who are Christians in name only, and because they were born in a Christian land; who, if in words they admit the truth, in a language stronger than that of words, in their practice deny the power of their faith, cannot possibly have either just claim, or fair pretension, to be brought into comparison with that reflective prince. He made voluntary inquisition respecting the religion of Christ Jesus, at the hand of his Apostle Saint Paul. He inquired, he heard, he was convinced, he was almost converted. Those men, on the contrary, make not inquiry at all; they hear, where they do hear, for form only; they care not to be convinced, and hence it naturally follows, they cannot be persuaded.

The class which stands next in order above these is, then, the lowest class of members of the visible Church, which can reasonably be introduced into the proposed comparison. Men who deliberately place themselves within the precincts of instruction; who inquire, with decent outward respect and interest, concerning the grounds and system

of their faith, both of the appointed ministers of the Church of Christ, and of his Holy Word; who believe the truths, observe the forms, obey the discipline, bow to the doctrines, and, where they fail inwardly to cherish, still, in their outward deportment, honour the duties of their holy religion. The frame of mind which is commonly legible, in the lives and conversation of this description of Christians, has unquestionably some striking features of resemblance to the temper of mind, which is disclosed in the conduct of the Jewish king. In one essential point, however, upon a nearer inspection, the members of this class may be found to sink below even his imperfect standard. The distinction lies in this, that in the religion of such Christians, it too generally appears that intellect only is employed. The inner man, the spiritual nature, wherein alone arises the wellspring of eternal life, is, with these, unmoved; their affections are not only unoccupied, they are wholly unconcerned. It is one thing to be convinced, it is quite another to be persuaded. Conviction, we know, relates to the understanding; persuasion, we feel, belongeth to the heart. The king was convinced, he was almost persuaded. With the class which I am here delineating, conviction is

every thing; while persuasion is altogether unacknowledged and unknown.

We may, here, with singular propriety and force, recal and apply a former observation, that the circumstance of such men being avowed Christians only heightens their responsibility; an observation which will receive added weight when you seriously revolve this question: If Agrippa, *an unconverted Jew*, could be touched and affected by the preaching of the Gospel, as I trust it has been proved he was, how much deeper would have been his feeling, and how much more fruitful his confession, had he, like those with whom we are now concerned, been already enrolled amongst the members of the visible Church of Christ!

But we come now to compare the conduct of this prince, and the confession which is recorded in the Book of Acts, with the conduct and confession of another, and superior order, amongst the component members of the Catholic Church. These are not convinced only, they are, within certain limits, impressed also, by the truths of their holy religion. They carry with them their feelings, to the study of their faith. The weight, however, and worth, and stability, of those feelings, I have already had occasion to examine, and to place before you; and in balancing the condition of such no-

minal Christians, with the condition and the conduct of the Jewish king, we are compelled, equally, by the dictates of candour, and the voice of conscience, to pronounce, that they, in truth and reality, are nothing more than his genuine followers and disciples. They inquire, they hear, they read, they think, they are *convinced*, but they are only almost persuaded. Let us, for a moment, allow ourselves to suppose, that Agrippa, at the period of his interview with Saint Paul, was already a professed disciple of Christ Jesus. Let us suppose further, that, as a Christian hearer, he listened to the discourse of the holy Apostle, with the same measure of feeling, and the same measure of effect, with which he did listen as an inquiring, but unconverted Jew; that is to say, that he hearkened to the inspired teacher, with attention, with interest, with conviction; but that, instead of receiving an impression, practical, deep, and durable, at the same moment in which he ceased to hearken, he had almost ceased to feel. Let us admit this imaginary case; and what benefit or advantage, I would ask, could this unhappy prince have derived from the added circumstance of his bearing the name of Christian? The same advantage and benefit assuredly, which they now possess, who, bearing as their birthright that sacred name, inquire, and hear, and feel, and forget, as he did;

who worship God in their imagination, and the world with their heart; who serve the Lord, and follow after idols; whose piety duly rises and falls, with the rise and fall of fluctuating feelings;—the mournful advantages of superiority in responsibility, superiority in guilt, and superiority in condemnation.

The inferences thus suggested, my brethren, are not unsuitable at the opening of this solemn season of Lent. These inferences have been drawn, however, in the present instance, with a view rather to awaken, than to terrify; to lead to amendment, than to excite alarm. For excepting the unhappy members of the lowest order (a leaven from which I trust this assembly is free), the self-degraded class of men, who are Christians in name, but infidels, either in their principles or in their lives; excepting only these, in the several orders and stages which have been analyzed in this discourse, there are both grounds of hope, and indications of progress, which, however they may fall below the hope and progress of the real Christian, still contain some elements of "better things to come."

It is something, it may prove no small advantage, when men think seriously of turning it to the true account, that, from sincere conviction of its truth and reality, they had accustomed

themselves to a decorous observance of the forms, the discipline, and the outward decencies of the Christian religion. It is more, if they have been used to attend those forms, to practise that discipline, and to study and regard these outward decencies, even with occasional and partial feelings of interest and devoutness. A religion of conviction, of belief, and observances, in itself a beaten and barren way, may, by the spirit of prayer and the answering grace of God, be so meliorated and be made fruitful, as to become a safe and grateful receptacle for the seed of the heavenly sower. By the same spirit, and the same divine responding aid, devotional feelings, having their rise in the excitement of occasion, and in their very nature, consequently, short-lived, fluctuating, and fallacious, may be silently, and almost imperceptibly, advanced, at once, into the flow and fixedness of principles. For the hill torrents, sudden, turbulent, and soon to pass away, shall then gently descend a permanent and peaceful stream; touched by His Spirit, whose alone it is to stablish, as to still the waves, the waters of the desert shall become the well-springs of life.

The secret of our deliverance lies within the compass of a single precept of Scripture, "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you; draw nigh

unto God, and he will draw nigh to you." "Resist the Devil," is ever the watch-word of the Christian soldier ; but of all men living, the half-persuaded Christian has most need to be studious of his devices ; for, with this class it is, that, in a peculiar sense, Satan transformeth himself into an angel of light. Visions of security are with these his opiate snares ; dreams of security, their sure destruction. If, to have lived, to continue living, at the passing moment, in a state of semi-Christianity, be, as assuredly it is, unhappy and unsafe ; still, our subtle adversary too well knows, that only our resting in such a state can make it fatal. To lead us so to rest, accordingly, is his continual aim ; and to effect this aim, the spirit of false security is his most deadly engine. Let us then be fearful, but not faint. Let us follow the inspired counsel of the chief of the Apostles ; and that we may be able to stand firm and unshaken against the last wiles of the Devil, let us, henceforward, "take unto us the whole armour of God." If we are, indeed, in earnest in our pursuit, we cannot but be diligent and earnest in our progress ; and, if once honestly and earnestly we set ourselves to seek after the more excellent way, even those half-raised stages of faith and feeling, which have been already

reviewed, and to rest in which would be ruin, may, from the nature, simply, and force of *habit*, in proportion to the measure of their inclination upward, be made happily instrumental to aid us in our ascent.

Do we then, through the grace of God, resolve to be Christians indeed; to effect a full and perfect union with that blessed band, who are members of the Church of Christ, both visible and invisible, both militant and triumphant? If we do so resolve, the path is before us; the words in which Saint Paul bade Agrippa farewell, point out to us the entrance, and, if wisely interpreted, will infallibly lead us rejoicing on our way: "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all who hear me this day, were both almost, and *altogether*, such as I am."

Will we then be persuaded to be Christians? We must henceforward become followers of Saint Paul, as he was the follower of the Lord Christ; we must apply our minds to master and make our own the holy Apostle's character and confession, and our hearts to transcribe and emulate his spirit and example. And what was this example? It was an example full, not only of faith, and hope, and charity which never faileth, but of these kindred springs, like that "river which went out of

Eden to water the garden," branched out in all the streams of a religious life. An example, in a word, of humility of mind, of lowliness of heart, of gentleness of conversation; of righteous intrepidity, of discreet zeal, and of unwearied continuance in well-doing; of Christian magnanimity, and of Christian forbearance; of noble disinterestedness with respect to the wealth of other men, of generous liberality with regard to the little that was his own; of deadness to this world, and of anticipated possession of the world which is to come; of patience, of resignation, of cheerfulness, and of holy joy, amidst trials, through sufferings, in imprisonments, and under death. And whence, it will be asked, sprang the power to be, to live, thus minded? From a heart, it is replied, touched by the grace, and impregnated with the love of God.

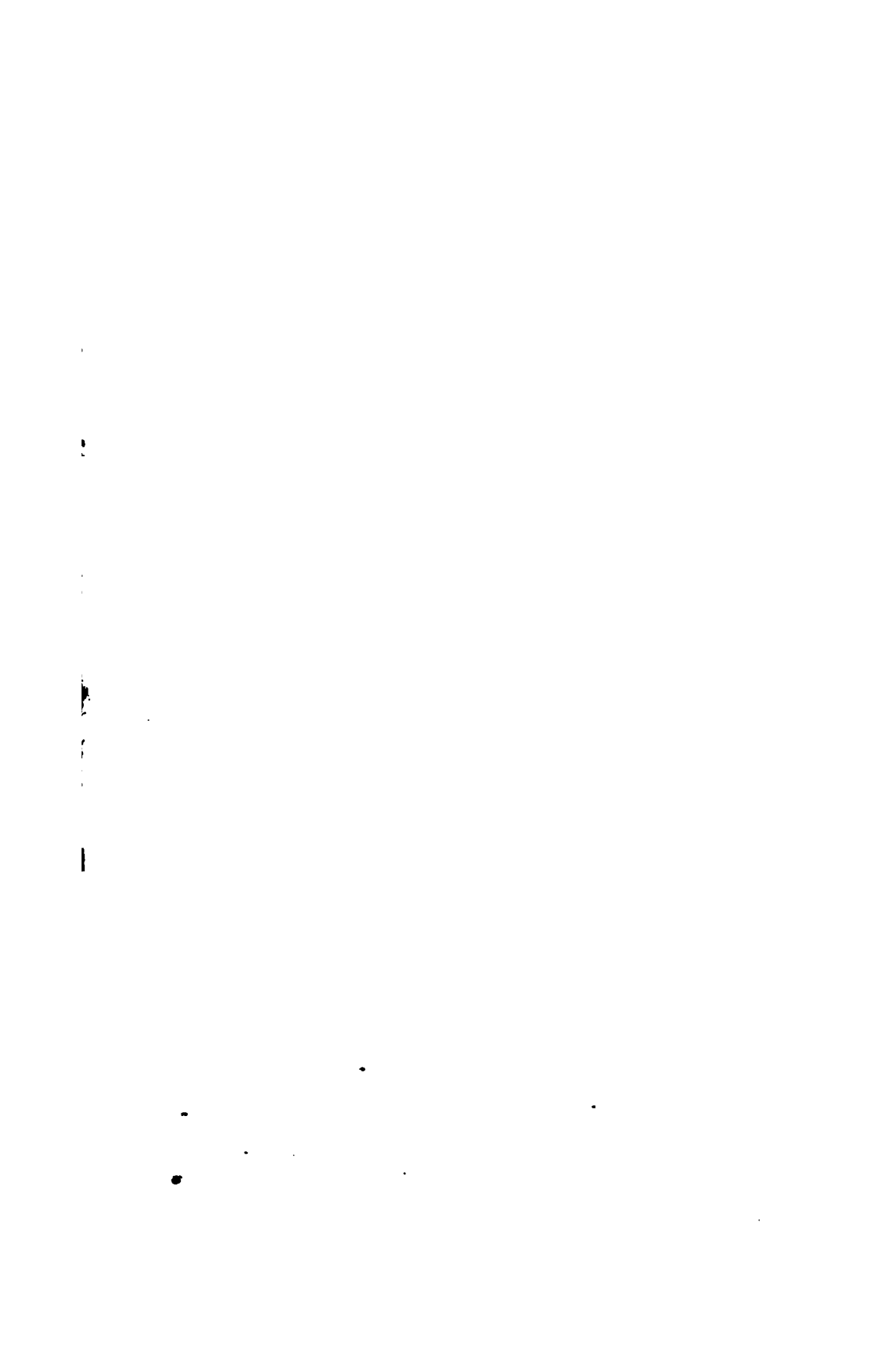
We, indeed, are not called to suffer with Saint Paul; but if we would resemble him, we must become possessors of those graces, and of that Spirit, which empowered the holy Apostle so to suffer and to endure. The properties of pure gold are still the same, in the mine, and in the mint; before, as after, it has passed through the refiner's fire.

We are not privileged to suffer with Saint Paul; yet, even from the easiness of our lot, may, if we

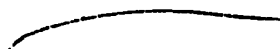
are only wisely provident, be drawn an excellent lesson of virtue; if this serves to provoke us to a holy jealousy and watchfulness; if it leads us more diligently to improve the slight occasions which may be graciously afforded us, of exercising those finer qualities of the mind and heart, which suffering only can employ and make perfect.

THE END.

LONDON
SPOTTISWOODES and SHAW,
New-street-Square.









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